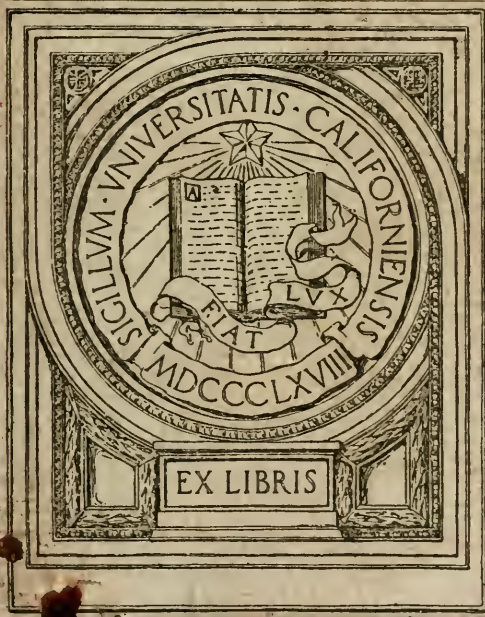


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Honoré de Balzac



Honoré de Balzac

MILITARY AND POLITICAL LIFE

VOLUME I

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J. Gougeon



## AT LA VIVETIÈRE

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\* \* \* *with eyes filled with hate, for she already felt a terrible craving for revenge springing up in her heart. Seeing death behind her, her powerlessness choked her. Her brain whirled as if she were going mad; thereupon, instead of killing herself, she seized the sword, brandished it over the marquis' head, and buried it in his body up to the hilt.*

THE NOVELS  
OF  
HONORÉ DE BALZAC

NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME  
COMPLETELY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

*THE CHOUANS*

BY G. BURNHAM IVES

WITH FIVE ETCHINGS BY RICARDO DE LOS RIOS, AFTER  
PAINTINGS BY ÉDOUARD TOUDOUZE

IN ONE VOLUME

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1898

BROWSING ROOM

THE CHOUANS

OR

BRETAGNE IN 1799

*Gift*

*SV*

*Dr Hale London*

189931





*TO MONSIEUR THEODORE DABLIN  
MERCHANT.*

To the first friend, the first work

DE BALZAC



# I

## THE AMBUSCADE



Early in the year VIII., in the first days of Vendémiaire, or, to conform to the calendar now in use, toward the close of the month of September, 1799, a hundred or more peasants and a considerable number of bourgeois, who had left Fougères in the morning on their way to Mayenne, were climbing the mountain of La Pélerine, which lies halfway between Fougères and Ernée, a small town where travellers generally stop to rest. This detachment, divided into several groups of unequal size, presented such an extraordinary collection of costumes and an assemblage of individuals belonging to so many different localities and professions, that it will be well to describe the characteristic differences between them, in order to give this narrative the vivid coloring on which so high a price is set to-day, although, according to some critics, it interferes with the delineation of sentiment.

A part of the peasants—and it was the larger

part—were barefooted and had no other clothing than large goatskins which covered them from the neck to the knees and trousers of very coarse white cotton, whose badly-trimmed yarn was typical of the indifference of the province in industrial matters. The flattened locks of their long hair joined so naturally the hair of the goatskin and concealed so entirely their downcast faces, that one could easily take the skin for their own, and confound the poor devils, at first sight, with the animals whose spoils served them as clothing. But soon you saw their eyes gleaming through the hair like drops of dew through dense foliage; and their glances, while denoting human intelligence, certainly spoke more of terror than of pleasure. Their heads were surmounted by dirty red woollen caps, like the Phrygian cap adopted by the Republic as the emblem of liberty. Every man carried on his shoulder a thick club of gnarled oak, at the end of which hung a long cotton wallet with but little inside. Others wore, over their caps, broad-brimmed hats of coarse felt, adorned with a sort of fringe in wool of various colors, which surrounded the crown. These latter were dressed throughout in the same coarse cotton of which the trousers and wallets of the first were made, and there was almost nothing about their costume that belonged to the new civilization. Their long hair fell over the collar of a round jacket which did not reach to the hips, with small square pockets at the sides,—a garment peculiar to the peasants of the West. Beneath this

open jacket could be seen a waistcoat of the same cotton, with large buttons. Some of them marched in wooden shoes, while others, for economy's sake, carried their leather shoes in their hands.

This costume, less original than the preceding, soiled by long usage and blackened by sweat and dust, had the historic merit of serving as a transition to the almost sumptuous garb of some few men who were scattered here and there among the motley assemblage like bright flowers. In very truth their blue linen trousers and their red or yellow waistcoats, like square cuirasses, embellished with two parallel rows of brass buttons, stood out as sharply against the white clothes and the goatskins of their comrades as bluebells and poppies in a field of grain. Some were shod with the clogs that the peasants of Bretagne know how to make for themselves; but almost all had heavy hob-nailed leather shoes and coats of very coarse cloth, cut like the old French coats, whose shape is still religiously adhered to by our peasants. Their shirt collars were fastened by silver buttons, representing hearts or anchors. Lastly, their wallets seemed to be better supplied than those of their companions, and several of them added to their travelling equipment, a flask, full of eau-de-vie doubtless, which hung by a strap from the neck.

Some townspeople appeared among these half-savage men, as if to mark the last limit of the civilization of those regions. With round hats, flat hats or caps on their heads, shod with half-boots or with

shoes kept in place by gaiters, they, like the peasants, presented a remarkable variety in their costumes. Some half a score of them wore the republican jacket known under the name of *carma-gnole*. Others, well-to-do mechanics doubtless, were clad from head to foot in cloth of the same color. Those who were most elegantly dressed were distinguished by frockcoats and redingotes of blue or green cloth, more or less threadbare. These last, veritable personages, wore boots of various shapes and toyed with heavy canes like men who bear up stoutly against ill fortune. Some carefully powdered heads, some neatly braided queues denoted that sort of care of the person which is inspired by a beginning of education or of fortune.

As you looked over these men, who seemed to have been picked up at random and to be amazed to find themselves in company, you would have said that it was the population of some village driven from their homes by a conflagration. But the period and the locality imparted an entirely different interest to this mass of men. An observer, familiar with the secret of the civil discords by which France was agitated at that time, would have found it a simple matter to identify the small number of citizens upon whose fidelity the Republic could rely in that troop, composed almost wholly of men who had borne arms against it four years before. One last striking feature left no manner of doubt as to the difference of opinion which divided the assemblage.

Only the republicans marched with something like cheerfulness, whereas the other members of the party, despite the noticeable differences in costume, exhibited upon their faces and in their bearing, the unvarying expression that misfortune causes. Bourgeois and peasants, all bore the imprint of profound melancholy ; there was something savage in their silence and they seemed to be bending beneath the burden of one universal thought, terrible beyond question, but carefully concealed, for their faces were impenetrable ; but the unusual moderation of their steps might denote some secret design. From time to time, some of them, made conspicuous by rosaries hanging from their necks, despite the risk they incurred in retaining that emblem of a religion that was suppressed rather than destroyed, shook their long hair and raised their heads suspiciously. At such times they stealthily scrutinized the woods, the paths and the cliffs by which the road was shut in, but they did it after the manner of a dog with his nose in the air, trying to scent game at a distance ; then, hearing only the monotonous sound of their silent companions' footsteps, they would lower their heads again and resume their despairing expression, like criminals on the way to the galleys, there to live and die.

The march of this column toward Mayenne, the heterogeneous elements of which it was composed and the diverse sentiments that it expressed were readily explained by the presence of another troop forming the head of the detachment. The troop

consisted of about one hundred and fifty soldiers, with arms and baggage, under the command of a *chef de demi-brigade*. It may be well to inform those who did not witness the drama of the Revolution that that title replaced the title of colonel, tabooed by the patriots as being too aristocratic. These soldiers belonged to a demi-brigade of infantry then stationed at Mayenne. In those days of internal dissensions, the natives of the West called all the republican soldiers *Blues*. This appellation was due to the first blue and red uniforms, the memory of which is still sufficiently green to make a description of them unnecessary. The detachment of Blues, then, was serving as escort to this assemblage of men, almost all of whom were ill-pleased to be taken to Mayenne, where military discipline was expected to give them the same enthusiasm, the same uniform, and the uniformity of gait in which they were then so entirely deficient.

This column was the contingent obtained with much difficulty from the district of Fougères and due from that district as its share of the levy of troops ordered by the Executive Directory of the French Republic by a law of the 10th Messidor preceding. The government had asked for a hundred millions and a hundred thousand men, in order to send prompt assistance to its armies, then being worsted by the Austrians in Italy, by the Prussians in Germany, and threatened in Switzerland by the Russians, in whom Suvaroff inspired hopes of the conquest of France. The departments of the West, known by the names



of Vendée, Bretagne and a portion of Basse Normandie, which had been pacified three years before by the labors of General Hoche, after a war lasting four years, seemed to have seized that moment to recommence the struggle. In the face of all these aggressions the Republic exhibited its former energy. In the first place, it provided for the defence of the departments attacked, by entrusting it to the patriotic portion of the inhabitants by one of the articles of the law of Messidor. In short, the government, having neither troops nor money to spare for its internal troubles, evaded the difficulty by a legislative gasconade: being unable to send anything to the rebellious departments, it gave them its confidence. Perhaps, too, it was hoped that this measure, by arming the citizens against one another, would destroy the active principle of the insurrection.

The article in question, which was the cause of disastrous reprisals, was thus conceived: *Free companies shall be organized in the departments of the West.* This impolitic arrangement caused the West to assume such a hostile attitude that the Directory despaired of crushing it at the first blow. And so, a few days later, it asked the Assemblies for special measures relative to the small contingents of recruits due under the article authorizing the free companies. Therefore a new law, promulgated a few days before the beginning of this narrative, and passed on the third supplementary day of the year VII., ordered that those small levies should be

organized into legions. The legions were to bear the name of the departments of Sarthe, Orne, Mayenne, Ille-et-Vilaine, Morbihan, Loire Inférieure, and Maine-et-Loire. *These legions, said the law, being organized especially to fight the Chouans, cannot be sent to the frontiers on any pretext.* These tedious, but little known details explain at once the weakness of the Directory's position at that time, and the march of the motley troop of men under escort of the Blues. Perhaps it will not be superfluous to add that these grand and patriotic expressions of the directorial will were never executed any farther than to be inserted in the *Bulletin des Lois*. Being no longer sustained by high moral ideas, by patriotism or by terror, which so recently caused them to be executed instantaneously, the decrees of the Republic created millions and soldiers, none of which found their way into the Treasury or the army. The mainspring of the Revolution was worn out in unskilful hands, and the laws received in their application the impress of circumstances, instead of dominating them.

The departments of Mayenne and Ille-et-Vilaine were at this time under the command of an old officer who, forming his judgment of the proper measures to take from what he knew of the locality, determined to extort from Bretagne the contingents due under the law, especially that of Fougères, one of the most redoubtable hotbeds of *chouannerie*. He hoped in this way to weaken the forces of those threatening districts. The loyal soldier took ad-

vantage of the illusory provisions of the law to declare that he would equip and arm the new recruits immediately, and that he held at their disposal one month's pay of the amount promised by the government to these exceptional troops. Although Bretagne at that time refused to perform any kind of military service, the operation succeeded at first on the faith of these promises, and the response was so prompt that the officer took alarm. But he was one of the old watch-dogs that are not easily taken by surprise. As soon as he saw that part of the contingents were hurrying to the appointed rendez-vous, he suspected that there was some secret motive for their prompt coming together, and perhaps he guessed rightly that they wanted to procure arms. Thereupon, without waiting for the laggards, he took measures to try and ensure his retreat to Alençon, in order to be nearer to the loyal provinces, although the growing insurrection in that region made the success of his plan very problematical.

This officer, who, in accordance with his instructions, maintained the most absolute secrecy as to the ill fortune of our armies and the by no means consoling news from La Vendée, had attempted, on the morning when this tale opens, to reach Mayenne by a forced march, where he proposed to carry out the law according to his own good pleasure, by filling the ranks of his demi-brigade with his Breton *conscripts*. The word conscript, which has since become so famous, had recently for the first

time taken the place, in the laws, of the term *requi-sitionnaire*, originally applied to the republican recruits. Before leaving Fougères, the commandant had ordered his troops to supply themselves secretly with cartridges and sufficient rations of bread for the whole party, in order not to attract the attention of the conscripts to the length of the march ; and he did not propose to halt for rest at Ernée, where the men of the contingent, having recovered from their surprise, might put themselves in communication with the Chouans, who were doubtless scattered among the neighboring fields. The gloomy silence that reigned among the recruits, who were surprised by the old republican's manœuvre, and their slow progress over the mountain, aroused to the highest pitch the suspicion of the demi-brigade commander, one Hulot ; the most salient features of the preceding description possessed a keen interest for him ; and so he marched silently on, surrounded by five young officers, all of whom respected their commanding officer's preoccupation. But when Hulot reached the crest of La Pèlerine, he suddenly turned his head, as if by instinct, to inspect the disturbed countenances of the recruits, and was not slow to break the silence. In fact, the constantly slackening gait of the recruits had already placed a gap of some two hundred yards between them and their escort. Hulot made a grimace which was peculiar to him.

“What the devil's the matter with all those fellows down there ?” he cried in a ringing voice.

“I should think our conscripts were closing the compasses instead of opening them !”<sup>1</sup>

At these words the officers who accompanied him turned about spontaneously, as if aroused from a sleep by a sudden crash. The sergeants and corporals imitated them and the company came to a stop without waiting for the long-wished-for word : “Halt !” Although the officers naturally looked back at the detachment which was crawling up La Pèlerine like a long turtle, those young men, whom the defence of their country had taken, like so many others, from their professional studies, and in whom war had not yet destroyed the artistic sense, were so struck by the spectacle spread out before them, that they did not reply to a remark whose importance was not known to them. Although they came from Fougères, where the same picture that they now looked upon was before their eyes, with the variations due to the change of perspective, they could not refrain from casting one last admiring glance upon it, like those *dilettanti* who take the greater enjoyment in a piece of music because of their acquaintance with its details.

From the summit of La Pèlerine, the broad valley of Couësnon lies before the eyes of the travellers, one of its culminating points on the horizon being occupied by the town of Fougères. Its château,

<sup>1</sup> In familiar language, *fermer le compas*—to close the compasses—means *to halt*, and *ouvrir le compas*—to open the compasses—means *to go forward*.

from the summit of the cliff on which it is built, overlooks three or four important roads, a location which made it formerly one of the keys of Bretagne. From where they stood, the officers could see the whole extent of that great basin, as remarkable for the prodigious fertility of its soil as for its varied aspects. On all sides mountains of schist arise in the shape of an amphitheatre, their reddish sides are hidden beneath forests of oak, and verdant glades lie concealed on their slopes. The cliffs form a vast enclosure, circular in appearance, in whose centre lies a vast, smooth plain laid out like an English garden. The multitude of quickset hedges enclosing numerous small properties of irregular shape, all thickly planted with trees, give to that carpet of verdure an aspect rare among French landscapes, and it contains secrets pregnant with charms in its multiplied contrasts, whose effects are broad enough to reach the most indifferent mind. At that moment, the landscape was enlivened by the fleeting splendor with which nature sometimes delights to enhance the beauty of her imperishable creations. While the detachment was crossing the valley, the rising sun had slowly scattered the fleecy white mists that hover over the fields on a September morning. Just as the soldiers turned their heads, an invisible hand seemed to lift from the landscape the last of the veils in which it had been enveloped, delicate clouds, like the transparent gauze shroud spread over precious stones, through which they arouse our curiosity. In all the vast expanse within

the officers' range of vision, there was not the slightest semblance of a cloud in the sky, to convince one, by the contrast of its silvery whiteness, that that immense blue vault was really the firmament. It seemed rather a silken canopy upheld by the irregular mountain peaks, and suspended in the air to shelter that magnificent aggregation of fields, plains, streams and woods.

The officers did not weary of gazing upon that landscape so replete with rustic beauties. Some hesitated long before resting their eyes upon the marvellous multiplicity of bosky groves, which the harsh tints of some few yellowing clumps enriched with the hue of bronze, and which were brought into still bolder relief by the emerald-green of the irregular meadows. Others revelled in the contrasts presented by the ruddy fields where the buckwheat stood in conical sheaves like the stacks of arms that soldiers make in camp, separated by other fields gilded by the prostrate rows of mown rye. Here and there a sombre slated roof, whence a column of white smoke issued, and the well-defined silvery lines of the tortuous branches of the Couësnon attracted the eye by one of those optical illusions which cause the mind to waver and to dream, one knows not why. The balmy freshness of the autumn breeze, the pungent odor of the forest, rose like a cloud of incense and intoxicated those who gazed admiringly upon that beautiful country, who contemplated with delight its unfamiliar flowers, its vigorous vegetation, its verdure which rivals that



of England, its neighbor, whose name is common to the two countries. The dramatic scene was enlivened by some few domestic animals. The birds sang, causing the valley to give forth a sweet, low melody that trembled in the air. If the thoughtful imagination will notice carefully the accidents of light and shade, the misty summits of the mountains, the fanciful shapes that have their birth in spots devoid of trees, or where the waters wind away in graceful, sinuous course ; if the memory colors, so to speak, this sketch that is as fleeting as the moment when it is taken, those persons to whom such pictures are not without attraction will have an imperfect image of the magic spectacle by which the still impressionable minds of the young officers were in some sort taken by surprise.

Reflecting that those poor fellows were regretfully leaving behind their native province and their cherished customs to go to meet their death, perhaps, in foreign lands, they involuntarily forgave them a delay which they understood. With the characteristic generosity of soldiers, they concealed their condescension behind a feigned desire to examine the strategic possibilities of that lovely region. But Hulot, whom we must call the *commandant* to avoid giving him the awkward title of *chef de demi-brigade* was one of those warriors who, when danger is imminent, do not allow themselves to be distracted by the beauties of the landscape, even though it might be the terrestrial paradise. He shook his head therefore and contracted two thick, black eye-



brows which gave a stern expression to his countenance.

“Why the devil don’t they come on?” he asked for the second time, in a voice made hoarse by the fatigues of war. “Is there any blessed Virgin in the village that they’re shaking hands with?”

“Do you ask why?” replied a voice.

When he heard those words, which sounded like the notes of the horn with which the peasants of those valleys call their flocks together, the commandant turned sharply around, as if he had felt the prick of a sword, and saw, within two yards, a more extraordinary individual than any of those he was taking to Mayenne to serve the Republic. He was a thickset, broad-shouldered man, with a head almost as large as a bull’s, which it resembled in more ways than one. Thick nostrils made his nose appear even shorter than it was. His heavy lips, parted by teeth as white as snow, his great, round black eyes with menacing lashes, his hanging ears and his red hair were less appropriate to one of our fair Caucasian race than to the genus *Herbivora*. The entire absence of the other characteristics of sentient man rendered that bare head even more remarkable. The face, bronzed by the sun, and with angular outlines vaguely suggestive of the granite that is the main element of the soil of those regions, was the only visible portion of the strange creature’s body. From the neck down, he was enveloped in a *sarrau*, a sort of red cotton blouse of even coarser material than that of the trousers of

the poorest conscripts. This *sarrau*, in which an antiquary would have recognized the *saye—saga—*or *sayon* of the Gauls, came to an end at his middle, where it was attached to two goatskins by pieces of wood, roughly whittled, from some of which the bark had not been removed. The she-goats' skins—to use the local term—in which his legs and thighs were encased, left no semblance of a human form. Enormous clogs concealed his feet. His long greasy hair, not unlike that of his goatskins, fell on each side of his face, separated into two equal parts, like the hair of the statues of the Middle Ages which are still seen in some cathedrals. Instead of the knotted clubs which the conscripts carried on their shoulders, he held against his breast, after the manner of a gun, a great whip, whose deftly braided lash seemed to be twice the length of ordinary lashes. The sudden appearance of this strange creature seemed easy to explain. At first glance, some of the officers supposed that the stranger was a recruit or conscript—the words were still used interchangeably—who was returning to the column, seeing that it had halted. Nevertheless, the man's appearance strangely disturbed the commandant; although he did not seem in the least alarmed, his brow became thoughtful, and after eyeing the stranger from head to foot, he repeated mechanically and as if absorbed by gloomy thoughts :

“Yes, why don't they come on? do you know?”

“Because,” replied his dark-browed interlocutor

with an accent that indicated considerable difficulty in speaking the French language, "because there," he said, stretching out his great, rough hand toward Ernée, "there is Maine and there Bretagne ends."

With that he stamped heavily on the ground, throwing the heavy handle of his whip at the commandant's feet. The impression produced upon the spectators of this scene by the stranger's laconic harangue resembled that which would be produced by a sudden blow upon a tam-tam in the midst of a band. The word harangue is hardly adequate to describe the hatred, the longing for vengeance expressed by a haughty bearing, abrupt speech and features instinct with cool and savage energy. The coarse exterior of the man, who looked as if he had been hewn with an axe, his rough shell, the stupid ignorance written on his features, made him a sort of barbarian demigod. He maintained a prophetic attitude and stood there like the genius of Bretagne, rising from a three years' sleep to renew a war in which victory never appeared without double mourning.

"There's a pretty head!" said Hulot to himself. "He looks to me like an ambassador from people who are preparing to parley with musket shots."

Muttering thus between his teeth, the commandant turned his eyes from the man to the landscape, from the landscape to the detachment, from the detachment to the steep embankments of the road, shaded at the top by the high broom plant of Bretagne; then he suddenly brought them back to the

stranger, as if subjecting him to a mute questioning, which he brought to a close by asking him abruptly :

“ Where do you come from ? ”

His keen, piercing glance sought to fathom the secrets of that impenetrable face, which, during the interval, had taken on the idiotic, torpid expression of a peasant in repose.

“ From the country of the *Gars*, ” he replied, without apparent embarrassment.

“ Your name ? ”

“ *Marche-à-Terre*. ”

“ Why do you bear your Chouan sobriquet, in spite of the law ? ”

Marche-à-Terre—we will call him by that name as he claimed it—looked at the commandant with an expression of imbecility so unmistakably genuine, that the commandant thought he could not have understood him.

“ Are you one of the Fougères contingent ? ”

Marche-à-Terre answered this question with an *I don't know* in a hopeless tone that checked all conversation. He seated himself calmly by the roadside, took from his blouse a few pieces of a thin black buckwheat cake, a national delicacy, the joys of which none but Bretons can appreciate, and began to munch it with stupid indifference. His appearance was so indicative of an entire absence of intelligence of any sort, that the officers in turn compared him as he sat there to one of the animals browsing on the rich pasturage of the valley, to the savages of America or to a native of the Cape of Good

Hope. Deceived by his attitude, the commandant himself had ceased to listen to his anxious thoughts, when, as he cast one last glance, by way of precaution, at the man whom he suspected to be the herald of approaching bloodshed, he saw that his hair, his blouse, his goatskin trousers were covered with thorns, dried leaves, bits of wood and brambles, as if the Chouan had travelled a long way through the underbrush. He glanced significantly at his adjutant Gérard, who was standing near, pressed his hand hard and said in an undertone :

“ We came out to look for wool and we shall go back shorn.”

The astonished officers looked at one another in silence.

This is a convenient spot for a little digression intended to explain and justify Commandant Hulot's apprehensions to certain domestic individuals who are accustomed to doubt everything because they see nothing, and who might deny the existence of Marche-à-Terre and the peasants of the West, whose conduct at this period was sublime.

The word *gars*, pronounced *gâ*, is a relic of the Celtic language. It made its way through the Bas Breton into the French, and the word contains more reminders of ancient times than any other word in our present language. The *gais* was the principal weapon of the Gaëls or Gauls ; *gaisde* meant armed ; *gais*, courage ; *gas*, strength. These instances prove the relationship of the word *gars* to words found in the language of our ancestors. The word is analo-

gous to the Latin word *vir*, man, the root of *virtus*, strength, courage. This dissertation finds its excuse in its nationality ; and then too, perhaps it will serve to rehabilitate, in the minds of some persons, the words *gars*, *garçon*, *garçonnette*, *garce*, *garcette*, generally proscribed in polite circles as inelegant, whose origin, however, is most warlike ; they will appear here and there in the course of this narrative. "He's a *fine garce!*" is a little known eulogistic expression which Madame de Staël picked up in a small town of Vendomois where she passed some days of exile.

Bretagne is the one spot in all France where Gaelic customs have left the strongest impress. The portions of that province where, even to our days, the wild life and superstitious minds of our uncultured ancestors have remained flagrant, so to speak, are called the country of the Gars. When a district is inhabited by a number of uncivilized creatures like those we have introduced in this scene, the country people speak of "the gars of such a parish"; and that classic appellation is a sort of reward for the fidelity with which they strive to preserve the traditions of the Gaelic language and customs : thus their lives retain deep traces of the superstitious beliefs and practices of ancient times. There the feudal customs are still respected. There the antiquarian finds druidical monuments still standing, and the genius of modern civilization stands aghast at the thought of penetrating immense primeval forests. Incredible ferocity, brutal obstinacy, but unswerving

fidelity to one's oath ; utter ignorance of our laws, our manners, our costume, our new coins, our language, but patriarchal simplicity and heroic virtues unite to make the inhabitants of these country districts poorer in intellectual combinations than the Mohicans and Redskins of North America, but withal as grand, as crafty and as unforgiving.

The place Bretagne occupies in the centre of Europe makes it a much more interesting object of study than Canada. Surrounded by lights, whose beneficent warmth does not reach it, the province resembles a frozen coal that remains cold and dark in the midst of a glowing fire. The efforts made by some great minds to win over that fair section of France, so rich in unknown treasures, to social life and to prosperity ; everything, even the attempts of the government, die in the bosom of an immovable race wedded to the practices of immemorial routine. This deplorable state of affairs may be explained to some extent by the nature of the country, furrowed by ravines, torrents, swamps and lakes, bristling with hedges—a sort of earthwork which makes of every field a citadel—and without roads or canals ; to some extent, too, by the natural tendencies of an ignorant population, enslaved by prejudices whose perils will be made evident by the details of this narrative, and unwilling to have aught to do with modern agricultural methods. The picturesque natural disposition of the country and the superstition of the people exclude all possibility of the association of individuals and the advantages to be

derived from the comparison and exchange of ideas. There are no villages. The precarious structures that they call houses are scattered over the country. Each family lives in its own house as in a desert. The only known gatherings are the ephemeral ones at the parish church on Sundays and holy days. Those silent gatherings, dominated by the rector, the only master of those coarse minds, last only a few hours. After listening to the terrible voice of the priest, the peasant returns for another week to his unhealthy abode ; he goes forth to work, he returns there to sleep. If he has a visitor, it is the priest—the soul of the whole countryside. Thus, it was in obedience to the voice of the priest that thousands of men hurled themselves upon the Republic, and that those portions of Bretagne, five years before the time at which this story begins, supplied great numbers of soldiers to the first *chouannerie*. The brothers Cottereau, bold smugglers who gave their name to that war, carried on their perilous trade from Laval to Fougères. But there was nothing noble in the insurrections of those districts, and it can be said with assurance that, whereas La Vendée turned brigandage into war, Bretagne turned war into brigandage. The banishment of the princes, the overthrow of the religion, were to the Chouans nothing more than pretexts for pillage, and the events of that internecine struggle contracted something of the rough savagery of the local customs. When true defenders of the monarchy came to recruit soldiers among that ignorant



and warlike people, they tried, but in vain, to impart under the white flag, some semblance of grandeur to the enterprises that had made the Chouan method of warfare odious, and the Chouans remained as a memorable example of the danger of exciting the half-civilized masses of a province.

The picture of the first valley presented by Bretagne to the traveller's eyes, the description of the men who composed the detachment of recruits, the portrait of the *gars* who appeared on the crest of La Pèlerine give a brief but faithful representation of the country and its people. A trained imagination can, from these details,—picture to itself the stage and the instruments of the conflict; its elements were there. The flowering hedges in those lovely valleys concealed invisible assailants. Every field was a fortress, every tree masked a pitfall, every old hollow willow trunk guarded a ruse. The field of battle was everywhere. Guns lay in wait at every corner for the Blues whom smiling young girls enticed within range of the firearms, with no thought that their conduct was treacherous; they went on pilgrimages with their fathers and brothers to learn new wiles and to receive absolution from wayside Virgins made of rotten wood. Religion, or rather the fetich-worship of those ignorant creatures, left them without remorse for murder done. So it was that, when the struggle was once begun, everything in the province became a source of danger, noise as well as silence, joy as well as fear, the domestic fireside as well as the highroad. There

was deep conviction in these acts of treachery. They were savages serving God and the king in the way that the Mohicans make war. But, to render the description of that conflict accurate and true at every point, the historian must add that the instant that the treaty negotiated by Hoche was signed, the whole region was friendly and laughing once more. Families, whose members were tearing one another to pieces the day before, supped safely under the same roof on the morrow.



The instant that Hulot detected the secret treachery betrayed by the condition of Marche-à-Terre's goatskin garments, he knew that the end had come of the blessed peace due to the genius of Hoche, the continuance of which seemed to him impossible. So war was to break forth again, more horrible doubtless than before, after a period of inaction lasting three years. The Revolution had grown milder since the 9th Thermidor, but perhaps it was about to resume the terrifying characteristics that had made it odious to all just minds. English gold had, as always, fomented the discords of France. The Republic, abandoned by young Bonaparte, who seemed to be its tutelary genius, was apparently in no condition to resist so many foes, and the most cruel of all was the last to appear. Civil war, pretended by innumerable partial uprisings, assumed an entirely new and grave phase when the Chouans conceived the plan of attacking such a strong escort.

Such were the reflections that passed through Hulot's mind, although much less succinctly, as soon as he thought that he detected, in the appearance of

Marche-à-Terre, an indication of a skilfully prepared ambushade, for, at first, he alone realized his danger.

The silence that followed the commandant's prophetic remark to Gérard, with which the preceding scene closed, gave Hulot time to recover his self-possession. The old soldier had almost staggered. He could not drive away the clouds that darkened his forehead when he thought that he was already surrounded by the horrors of a war, whose atrocities would perhaps put cannibal tribes to shame. Captain Merle and Adjutant Gérard, his two friends, sought an explanation for the dread—a novel sight to them—depicted on their chief's face, and looked from him to Marche-à-Terre, who sat munching his cake by the roadside, without succeeding in establishing the slightest connection between that species of animal and their intrepid leader's anxiety. But Hulot's face soon grew brighter. While deploring the misfortunes of the Republic, he rejoiced that he had to fight for her, he gladly made an inward vow that he would not be fooled by the Chouans, and that he would fathom the secret of the mysterious and crafty man they did him the honor to employ against him. Before forming any decision, he set about examining the locality in which his enemies proposed to surprise him. When he saw that the road they were then following passed through a sort of gorge, not very deep, in truth, but flanked by dense woods from which several paths led into the road, he drew his great black eyebrows together and

said to his two friends in a low voice trembling with excitement :

“ We’ve fallen into a fine hornet’s nest ! ”

“ What is it you’re afraid of, pray ? ” asked Gérard.

“ Afraid ? ” echoed the commandant ; “ yes, afraid. I have always been afraid of being shot like a dog on the edge of a wood, without even the warning of a *qui vive* ? ”

“ Bah ! ” said Merle with a laugh. “ *Qui vive* ? is a great mistake.”

“ Are we really in danger ? ” asked Gérard, as surprised by Hulot’s *sang-froid* as he had been by his momentary panic.

“ Hush ! ” said the commandant, “ we’re in the wolf’s jaws, it’s as dark there as it is in an oven and we must strike a light. Luckily,” he added, “ we hold the crest of this hill ! ”

He embellished his remark with an energetic epithet and continued :

“ Perhaps I shall see my way finally.”

The commandant, leading the two officers to the side of the road, surrounded Marche-à-Terre ; the *gars* pretended to think that he was in their way and promptly rose to his feet.

“ Stay there, vagabond ! ” cried Hulot, pushing him back on the bank where he had been sitting.

From that moment the commandant did not cease to watch the heedless Breton closely.

“ My friends,” he went on, addressing the two officers in an undertone, “ it is time to tell you that

the shop has been broken into over yonder. The Directory, as the result of a row in the Assemblies, has used its broom on our affairs once more. Those *pentarchs*, or rather *pantins*<sup>1</sup>—it is better in French—of directors have lost a trusty blade. Bernadotte will have nothing more to do with them.”

“Who takes his place?” asked Gérard eagerly.

“Milet-Mureau, an old graybeard. They select a very bad time to let tongues govern! English broadsides are pouring in on us from all directions. All these cockchafers of Vendéans and Chouans are in the air, and they who are working the puppets knew enough to seize the moment when we are going to the wall.”

“How so?” said Merle.

“Our armies are beaten everywhere,” rejoined Hulot, lowering his voice more and more. “The Chouans have already intercepted the couriers twice, and I received my despatches and the last decrees only because they were sent me by special messenger by Bernadotte just as he was leaving the ministry. Luckily some of my friends have written me confidentially about the commotion. Fouché has discovered that the tyrant Louis XVIII. has been advised by traitors in Paris to send a leader to his ducks in the interior. They think that Barras is false to the Republic. In short, Pitt and the princes have sent hither an ex-noble, an energetic, talented

<sup>1</sup> *Pentarch*, member of a pentarchy or government of five; the Directory was composed of five members; *pantin*, somewhat similar in pronunciation, means jumping-jack.

fellow, whose object it is to knock the cap off the Republic's head by uniting the efforts of the Vendéans with those of the Chouans. My gentleman has landed in Morbihan, I was the first to find it out and I sent word to the rascals in Paris ; the *Gars* is the name he has taken. All such beasts as that," he said, pointing to Marche-à-Terre, "burden themselves with names that would give a true patriot the colic if he had to bear them. Now our man is in this region. That Chouan's arrival—" and he pointed again to Marche-à-Terre—"tells me that he's on our backs. But you can't teach an old monkey to make faces, and you must help me to whistle my linnets back into the cage, and in a hurry too ! I should be a pretty duffer, if I allowed myself to be snared like a rook by this *ci-devant*, who comes from London on the pretext of having to dust our hats !"

Upon learning these secret and critical circumstances, the two officers, knowing that their leader never took alarm without cause, assumed the grave expression that a soldier's face wears when danger is most pressing, if he be of stern temper and accustomed to go to the bottom of affairs. Gérard, whose rank, since suppressed, brought him near his leader, attempted to make some reply and to ask for all the political news, some of which was evidently withheld, but a gesture from Hulot imposed silence upon him ; and all three renewed their observation of Marche-à-Terre. The Chouan did not give the least indication of emotion at finding himself under

the watchful eyes of men as formidable by reason of their intelligence as by reason of their bodily strength. The curiosity of the two officers, to whom this sort of warfare was a novelty, was roused to a high pitch by the beginning of an affair that presented an almost romantic interest, and they attempted to joke about it ; but at the first word that escaped their lips, Hulot looked at them gravely and said :

“ God in heaven ! we mustn’t smoke over the powder barrel, citizens. To be brave out of season is like the amusement of carrying water in a basket. Gérard,” he said in the adjutant’s ear, “ draw near to yonder brigand gradually and be ready to run your sword through his body at the slightest suspicious movement on his part. For my own part, I propose to take measures to carry on the conversation, if our unknown enemies choose to begin it.”

Gérard bent his head slightly in token of obedience, then began to contemplate the different aspects of the valley, with which we are sufficiently familiar ; he seemed to wish to examine them more closely and stepped backward, as if unconsciously ; but it is certain that the landscape was the last thing of which he took notice. For his part, Marche-à-Terre made no sign to indicate that the officer’s manœuvre involved him in any danger ; from the way he played with the end of his whip, you would have said he was fishing with pole and line in the ditch.



While Gérard was trying thus to take up a position in front of the Chouan, the commandant said in an undertone to Merle :

“ Give a sergeant ten picked men, and go yourself and station them above us, at the point on the top of the hill where the road widens, forming a plateau, and from which you can see a good strip of the Ernée road. Select a place where the road isn't bordered with woods and from which the sergeant can keep an eye on the fields. Call Clef-des-Cœurs, he's a bright fellow.—There's nothing to laugh at, I wouldn't give two sous for our skins if we don't take our own time.”

While Captain Merle was carrying out this order with a promptness of which he understood the importance, the commander waved his right hand to enjoin silence on the soldiers who surrounded him and who were talking and laughing. With another gesture, he ordered them to resume their weapons. When silence was established he looked from one side of the road to the other, listening with anxious intentness, as if he hoped to hear some stifled sound, the clash of arms or footsteps precursory of the expected struggle. His piercing black eyes seemed to probe the forest to an extraordinary distance ; but, finding nothing there, he consulted the sand of the road, after the manner of savages, trying to discover some traces of the invisible foes of whose audacity he was well aware. Abandoning the hope of discovering anything to justify his fears, he went to the side of the road, climbed the low

slopes with difficulty and walked slowly along the top. Suddenly he realized how necessary his experience was to the welfare of his command, and he went down again. His face became darker than ever; for, in those days, the leaders always regretted that they could not reserve the most perilous tasks for themselves alone. The other officers and the common soldiers, having noticed the preoccupation of a chief whose character they admired and whose worth was well known to them, concluded that his extreme solicitude denoted impending danger; but being incapable of suspecting its gravity, they stood like statues and almost held their breath instinctively. Like those dogs who try to divine the purpose of a skilful sportsman whose orders are incomprehensible to them, but who obey none the less promptly, the soldiers looked alternately at the valley of Couësnon, the woods along the road and the stern face of their commandant, trying to read their fate therein. They consulted one another with their eyes, and more than once a smile passed from mouth to mouth.

When Hulot made his grimace, Beau-Pied, a young sergeant who was considered the wit of the company, said in an undertone :

“ In the devil’s name, what sort of a mess are we in, that that old trooper of a Hulot should have such a sour face ? He looks as if he were before a court-martial ! ”

Hulot having glanced sternly at Beau-Pied, the silence required of troops under arms reigned

supreme. Amid that solemn silence could be heard the lagging steps of the conscripts, whose feet rose and fell upon the gravel with a dull, regular, crunching sound, that added an uncertain element of emotion to the general anxiety. This indefinable feeling will be understood only by those who, when suffering from the agony of suspense, have felt the wild beating of their hearts, in the silence of the night, increased tenfold by some noise whose monotonous repetition seemed to pour terror into their hearts drop by drop. Resuming his position in the middle of the road, the commandant began to ask himself the question : " Have I made a mistake ? " He gazed with concentrated wrath that shot in lightning flashes from his eyes, at the tranquil and stupid Marche-à-Terre ; but the savage irony which he could detect in the Chouan's listless glance, persuaded him to continue his precautionary measures. At that moment Captain Merle, having executed Hulot's orders, returned to his side. The silent actors in this scene, the type of innumerable others which made this the most dramatic of all wars, impatiently awaited fresh developments, anxious to have the obscure points of their military situation cleared up by other manœuvres.

" We did well, captain," said the commandant, " to station the small number of patriots included among the recruits at the rear of the detachment. Take a dozen more good fellows, with sub-lieutenant Lebrun at their head, and lead them quickly to the rear ; they will support the patriots who are already

there, and will push the whole of yonder flock of birds forward,—at a good pace, too,—so as to bring them up, at double quick, to the high ground occupied by our men. I await you.”

The captain disappeared in the midst of the troop. The commandant glanced at four men, one after another, whose intrepidity, address and activity were known to him; he called them silently, by pointing his finger at them, one by one, and making the friendly sign which consists in bringing the forefinger toward the nose with a quick movement several times repeated; they obeyed his summons.

“You served with me under Hoche,” he said to them, “when we brought those brigands who called themselves the *King’s Chasseurs* to their senses; you know how they hid to decoy the Blues!”

At this implied eulogy of their shrewdness, the four soldiers nodded their heads with a significant wink. Their faces were of that heroic martial cast, whose expression of careless resignation showed that, since the beginning of the conflict between France and Europe, their ideas had not gone behind their cartridge cases, or ahead of their bayonets. With their lips pressed together like a purse when the cords are drawn tight, they looked at their leader with an attentive and interested air.

“Very good,” continued Hulot, who possessed in an eminent degree the art of speaking the picturesque language of the soldiers, “such sharp rabbits as we are mustn’t let Chouans fool us, and there

are Chouans here or my name's not Hulot. I want you four to beat up the woods on the sides of the road. Those fellows behind are going to spin out the march. So, follow close, try not to be caught off guard, and show me what there is in those woods, quick !”

Then he pointed out to them the dangerous ridges overlooking the road. All, by way of thanking him, carried the back of the hand to their old three-cornered hats, whose high brims, battered by the rain and made limp by long use, were falling over on the crown. One of them, named Larose, a corporal well known to Hulot, tapped his gun-barrel and said :

“ We'll whistle a little tune on the clarinet for them, commandant.”

They started off, two on the right, two on the left. Not without some secret emotion did their companions watch them disappear on the sides of the road. Their anxiety was shared by the commandant, who believed that he had sent them to certain death. He shuddered involuntarily when he could no longer see the tops of their hats. Officers and men listened to the gradually lessening noise of their footsteps on the dry leaves with a feeling that was all the keener from being carefully concealed. In war time, scenes constantly occur where the endangering of four men's lives causes more dismay than the thousands of dead left on the field of Jemmapes. Soldiers' faces wear such a multiplicity of expressions, and all so fleeting, that those who paint

them are obliged to appeal to the memories of those who have been soldiers, and leave pacific minds to study the dramatic features, for such tempests of emotion, abounding in details, cannot be fully described except at interminable length.

Just as the bayonets of the four soldiers ceased to gleam through the bushes, Captain Merle returned, having carried out the commandant's order with lightning-like rapidity. Thereupon Hulot, with two or three orders in quick succession, drew up the rest of his troop in battle array in the middle of the road ; then he ordered a forward movement to the summit of La Pèlerine, where his little vanguard was stationed ; but he himself marched last, walking backward, in order to observe the slightest change that might take place at any point in the landscape, which nature had made so charming and which man made so terrible. He reached the spot where Gérard was watching Marche-à-Terre, just as the latter, who had followed with an apparently indifferent eye all the commandant's manœuvres, but was then watching with incredible keenness the two soldiers in the woods on the right side of the road, whistled three or four times in such a way as to produce the clear, piercing note of the screech-owl. The three celebrated smugglers whose names have already been mentioned made use of certain variations of that cry at night, to warn one another of ambuscades, of impending danger and of anything that was of interest to them. Thence their sobriquet of *chuin*, which means screech-owl or gray-owl

in the patois of the province. That corrupted word was used to designate the men who, in the first war, imitated the tactics and the signals of the three brothers. When he heard that suspicious whistling, the commandant halted and gazed fixedly at Marche-à-Terre. He pretended to be deceived by the Chouan's idiotic manner, in order to keep him at hand like a barometer to indicate the movements of the enemy. Therefore he stayed Gérard's hand as he was preparing to dispatch the Chouan. Then he stationed two soldiers a few steps away from the spy, and in a loud, distinct voice, ordered them to stand ready to shoot him at the least sign that should escape him. Despite his imminent danger, Marche-à-Terre seemed to feel no emotion, and the commandant, who was studying him closely, noticed his insensibility.

"The greenhorn doesn't know much!" he said to Gérard. "Ha! ha! it isn't easy to read a Chouan's face; but this fellow betrayed himself by his anxiety to show his courage. Look you, Gérard, if he had feigned terror I should have taken him for a fool. He and I would have been a pair. I was at the end of my string. Oh! we shall be attacked! But let them come! I am ready now."

Having uttered these words in a low tone and with a triumphant air, the old soldier rubbed his hands and glanced at Marche-à-Terre with a cunning expression; then he folded his arms across his breast, stood in the middle of the road between his two favorite officers and awaited the result of his

dispositions. Sure of the battle, he looked calmly at his soldiers.

“ Oh ! there’s going to be a shindy, the commandant just rubbed his hands,” said Beau-Pied in a low tone.

The critical situation of Commandant Hulot and his detachment was one of those where it is so certain that lives are at stake, that men of spirit make it a point of honor to exhibit great calmness and self-possession. At such times men judge themselves as a court of last resort. Thus the commandant, being better aware of the danger than his two officers, staked his pride upon appearing to be the most tranquil of the party. Resting his eyes upon Marche-à-Terre, upon the road and upon the woods, one after another, he awaited, not without agonizing suspense, the report of the general discharge of the Chouans, whom he believed to be hiding, like hobgoblins, all about him ; but his face remained impassive. When the eyes of all the soldiers were fastened upon his, he wrinkled slightly his dark, pockmarked cheeks, drew back his upper lip and winked, a grimace always taken for a smile by his soldiers ; then he brought his hand down upon Gérard’s shoulder, saying :

“ Now, we have quieted down again ; what were you going to say to me just now ? ”

“ What new crisis is approaching, commandant ? ”

“ It’s nothing very new,” he replied in an undertone. “ All Europe is against us and this time they have a fine chance. While the Directors are fight-



ing among themselves like horses without hay in a stable, and everything is falling to pieces in their government, they leave the armies without reinforcements. We are crushed in Italy! Yes, my friends, we have evacuated Mantua as a result of the disaster of Trebia, and Joubert has lost the battle of Novi. I trust that Massena will hold the mountain passes of Switzerland, which are threatened by Suvaroff. Our cause is hopeless on the Rhine. The Directory has sent Moreau there. Can that fellow defend a frontier?—I wish he could, but the coalition will end by trampling on us, and, as ill-luck would have it, the only general who could save us has gone to the devil down yonder, in Egypt! How could he come back, moreover? England is mistress of the sea.”

“Bonaparte’s absence doesn’t disturb me, commandant,” replied the young adjutant Gérard, in whom careful education had developed a superior mind. “Will our Revolution come to a standstill? Ah! it is our duty to do something more than defend the French territory, we have a double mission. Should we not also preserve the soul of the country, the noble principles of liberty and independence, the light of human reason, kindled by our Assemblies, which I hope will spread gradually over the world? France is like a traveller entrusted with a light, which she carries in one hand while she defends herself with the other; if your news is true, never within ten years have we been surrounded by more people who are trying to blow it out. Doctrines

and country, everything is at the point of extinction."

"Alas, yes!" said Commandant Hulot with a sigh. "Those clowns of Directors have succeeded in getting into hot water with every man who could steer the ship skilfully. Bernadotte, Carnot, everybody, even to citizen Talleyrand, has left us. In short, there is only a single good patriot left, friend Fouché, who has everything in his hands through the police; there's a man for you! It was he who gave me timely warning of this insurrection. However, we're caught in some sort of trap here, I'm sure of it."

"Oh! if the army doesn't take a hand in our government," said Gérard, "the lawyers will put us in a worse fix than we were in before the Revolution. As if those poor fools knew how to command!"

"I'm always afraid," rejoined Hulot, "that I shall hear they are negotiating with the Bourbons. Great God! if they should reach an understanding with them, what a pickle we fellows here should be in!"

"No, no, commandant, we shan't come to that," said Gérard. "The army, as you say, will raise its voice, and provided that it doesn't take its words from Pichegru's vocabulary, I trust that we shall not be hacked to pieces for ten years, just to grow cotton and see others spin it."

"Yes, indeed," cried the commandant, "it has cost us terribly dear to change our costume."

"Very good," said Captain Merle, "let us con-

tinue to act the part of good patriots here, and try to prevent our Chouans from having any communication with La Vendée ; for if they do come together and England takes a hand in it, why, this time I wouldn't answer for the cap of the Republic, One and Indivisible."

At that point the conversation was interrupted by the cry of the screech-owl apparently some distance away. The commandant, more disturbed than ever, looked once more at Marche-à-Terre, whose impassive face gave, so to speak, no sign of life. The conscripts, urged forward by an officer, were huddled together like a herd of cattle in the middle of the road, some thirty paces from the company drawn up in order of battle. About ten paces behind them were the soldiers and the patriots commanded by Lieutenant Lebrun. The commandant cast his eyes over his order of battle and gave one last glance at the picket stationed in advance of his position. Satisfied with the disposition of his forces, he was on the point of turning to give the order to march, when he spied the tricolored cockades of two soldiers returning, after searching the woods on the left side of the road. As he saw nothing of the two scouts on the other side, the commandant determined to await their return.

"Perhaps that's where the bomb will burst," he said to his two officers, pointing to the woods in which his two lost children had buried themselves.

While the two skirmishers were making something in the nature of a report to him, Hulot took

his eyes from Marche-à-Terre. The Chouan thereupon began to whistle vigorously in such a way as to make the sound carry a tremendous distance ; then, before any of those who were watching him could take aim at him, he struck them a blow with his whip that threw them down on the bank. Instantly the republicans were surprised by an outburst of wild shrieks or rather howls. A terrible discharge of musketry from the wood on the crest of the bank where the Chouan had been sitting, struck down seven or eight soldiers. Marche-à-Terre, at whom five or six men fired without hitting him, disappeared in the woods after clambering up the slope with the rapidity of a wild cat ; his wooden shoes rolled into the ditch, and every one could see upon his feet the heavy hobnailed shoes usually worn by the King's Chasseurs. At the first yell uttered by the Chouans, all the conscripts leaped into the woods at the right, like a flock of birds flying away at the approach of a traveller.

"Fire on those hounds !" cried the commandant.

The company fired on them, but the conscripts had succeeded in getting out of reach of the fusillade by jumping behind trees, and before the guns could be reloaded, they had disappeared.

"Pass decrees for the organization of departmental legions, eh ?" said Hulot to Gérard. "One must be a donkey like a director to think of relying on a conscription in this province. The Assemblies would do better not to vote us so much money and clothes and supplies, but give us a little."

“The rascals like their cakes better than hard tack,” said Beau-Pied, the wag of the company.

At his words the deserters were assailed with hooting and loud laughter from the little troop of republicans, but suddenly they became silent once more. They saw the two men the commandant had sent to beat up the woods on the right creeping painfully down the embankment. The less severely wounded of the two supported his comrade, whose blood drenched the ground. The poor fellows were about half-way down when Marche-à-Terre showed his hideous face; he took such true aim at the two Blues that he finished them at a single shot and they rolled heavily into the ditch. No sooner did his great head appear than thirty muskets were raised; but, like a phantom figure, he disappeared behind the fatal tufts of broom. These events, which so many words are required to describe, took place in a moment; in another moment the patriots and the soldiers of the rear guard joined the rest of the escort.

“Forward!” cried Hulot.

The company pushed rapidly forward to the higher, open ground where the picket had been stationed. There the commandant drew up the company in battle order; but he saw no indications of a hostile demonstration on the part of the Chouans and concluded that the only purpose of the ambuscade was to set free the conscripts.

“Their yells,” he said to his two friends, “indicate to my mind that they are not in force. Let

us go forward at the double-quick and we may reach Ernée without having them on our backs."

His words were overheard by a patriot conscript, who left the ranks and walked to where Hulot stood.

"General," he said, "I've fought against the Chouans before. May I have two words with you?"

"He's a lawyer, they always believe themselves in court," the commandant whispered to Merle.—  
"Go on with your argument," he said to the young Fougerais.

"Commandant, the Chouans have brought arms for the men they've just taken as recruits, there's no doubt of that. Now, if we show 'em our heels, they'll wait for us at every turn in the road and kill us to a man before we get to Ernée. We must argue, as you say, but with cartridges. During the skirmish, which will last longer than you think, one of my comrades will go and bring up the National Guard and free companies from Fougères. Although we're only conscripts, you'll see then if we belong to the race of crows."

"Then you think the Chouans are numerous?"

"Judge for yourself, citizen commandant!"

He led Hulot to a part of the plateau from which the sand had been removed as if with a rake; then, after calling his attention to that fact, he led him some distance into a path where they saw marks of the passage of a large number of men. The leaves were trodden into the ground.

"Those are the *Gars* from Vitré," said the Fou-

## ON LA PÈLERINE

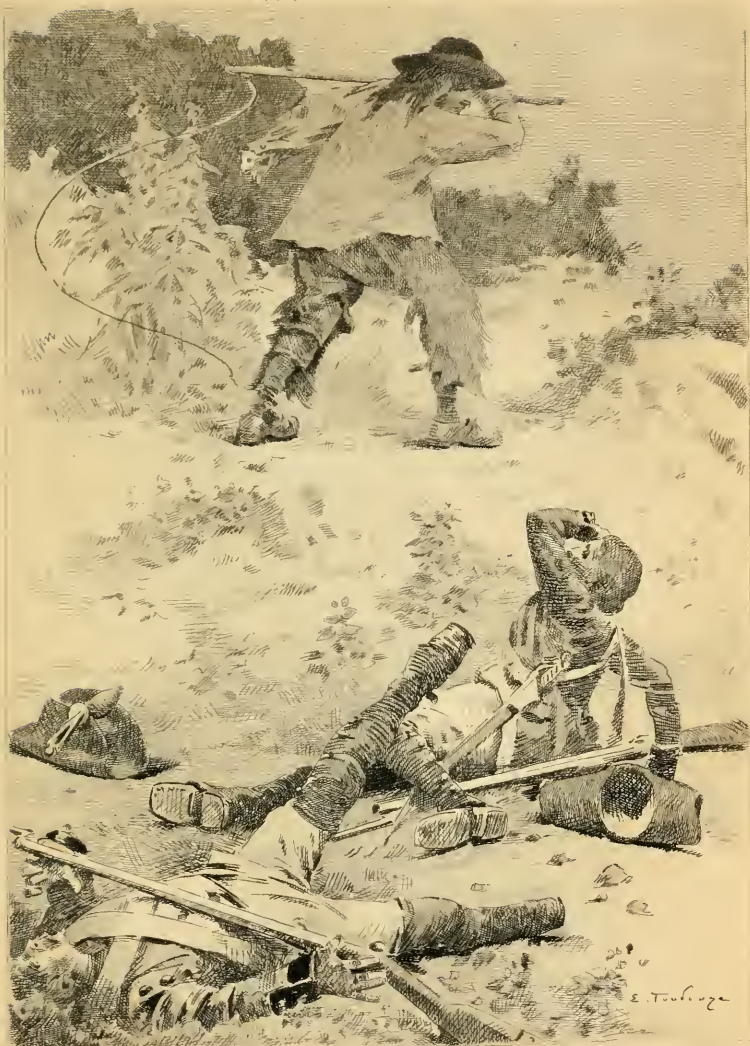
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*The Chouan thereupon began to whistle vigorously in such a way as to make the sound carry a tremendous distance ; then, before any of those who were watching him could take aim at him, he struck them a blow with his whip that threw them down on the bank.*





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gerais ; " they are on their way to join the Bas Normands."

" What's your name, citizen ? " queried Hulot.

" Gudin, commandant."

" Well, Gudin, I make you corporal of your bourgeois. You look to me like a staunch fellow. I leave it to you to select one of your comrades to be sent to Fougères. You will stay beside me. First of all, go with your men and pick up the guns, cartridge cases and uniforms of our poor fellows whom these brigands shot down. We won't stay here to eat musket-balls without returning them."

The intrepid Fougerais went back to collect the property of the dead men, and the whole company covered them by a well-sustained fire on the woods, so that they succeeded in stripping the bodies without losing a man.

" These Bretons," said Hulot to Gérard, " will make famous foot soldiers if they will ever learn to mess together."

Gudin's messenger started off on the run by a winding path through the woods on the left. The soldiers inspected their weapons and made ready for the combat ; the commandant passed them in review, smiled upon them, took his place two paces in front with his two favorite officers and dauntlessly awaited the attack of the Chouans. For a moment silence reigned once more, but it was not of long duration. Three hundred Chouans, whose costumes were identical with those of the conscripts, debouched from the woods at the right and came

forward in a disorderly mass, uttering veritable howls, and filled the whole road in front of the weak battalion of Blues. The commandant arranged his troops in two equal bodies, each presenting a front of ten men. He placed between the two his twelve recruits equipped in hot haste, and took his station at their head. The little army was protected by two wings of twenty-five men each, who manœuvred on the two sides of the road under the orders of Gérard and Merle. Those two officers were to take the Chouans in flank and prevent their spreading out—*s'égailer*.—That word in the patois of those countries refers to the practice of scattering over the fields, where every peasant would take up a position from which he could fire on the Blues without danger; when that happened, the republican armies were at a loss how to come at their enemies.

These dispositions, ordered by the commandant with the rapidity demanded by the emergency, inspired the soldiers with his confidence, and they all marched silently forward upon the Chouans. After the few seconds consumed by the two bodies in approaching each other, there was a point-blank discharge which spread death through the ranks of both. At that moment the two republican wings, to which the Chouans were unable to offer any resistance, fell upon their flanks, and by a hot, well-directed fire, sowed death and confusion among their enemies. This manœuvre made the two parties almost equal numerically. But the Chouan character was notable for an intrepidity and constancy

that would stand any test ; they did not give way, their losses did not make them waver, they closed up and tried to surround the small, dark, compact troop of Blues, which covered so little ground that it resembled a queen bee in the midst of a swarm. Thereupon ensued one of those ghastly combats in which the rattle of musketry is rarely heard, but is replaced by the clashing of side arms in hand-to-hand struggles, and in which numbers turn the scale where courage is equal on both sides. The Chouans would have carried the day at the first onset, had not the two wings commanded by Merle and Gérard succeeded in giving them two or three volleys diagonally across their lines. The Blues in those two wings should have held their positions and continued to bring down their formidable adversaries by their skilful marksmanship ; but, being roused to frenzy by the sight of the danger hanging over the heroic band of soldiers then completely surrounded by the King's Chasseurs, they rushed into the crowd like madmen, with fixed bayonets, and made the struggle more equal for some moments. The two troops thereupon fell upon each other with savage ferocity, sharpened by the frenzy and cruelty of party spirit, which made that war so exceptional. Every one, mindful of his own danger, became silent. The scene was as chilling and sombre as death. Amid the silence of tongues, through the clashing of weapons and the grinding of the gravel under their feet, naught could be heard save the muttered groans and exclamations of those who fell, griev-

ously wounded or dying. In the centre of the republican force, the twelve recruits defended the commandant with such heroic courage as he gave advice and issued order upon order, that some soldiers shouted more than once :

“ Bravo, recruits ! ”

Hulot, with unmoved countenance and his eye upon everything, soon noticed among the Chouans a man surrounded by a picked guard, who seemed to be their leader. It seemed to him most essential that he should have a good look at the officer ; but he made several vain attempts to distinguish his features, which were constantly hidden from him by the red caps and broad-brimmed hats. But he did distinguish Marche-à-Terre, who stood beside his chief repeating his orders in a hoarse voice, his carbine being never idle. The commandant lost patience at his repeated failures. He waved his sword above his head, encouraged his recruits, and charged the centre of the Chouans with such fury that he cut through their lines to a point where he could see the leader, whose face unfortunately was completely hidden by a large felt hat with a white cockade. But the unknown, taken aback by such an audacious attack, recoiled and raised his hat with an abrupt movement, and thereupon Hulot was able to make a hasty mental sketch of his person. The young officer, whom Hulot took to be not more than twenty-five years old, wore a green cloth hunting jacket. There were pistols in his white belt. His heavy shoes were studded with nails like those of

the Chouans. Hunting gaiters reaching to the knees and fitted to breeches of very coarse ticking completed his costume, which enveloped a slender and well set up figure of medium height. Enraged to find the Blues within reach of his person, he lowered his hat and rushed toward them; but he was speedily surrounded by Marche-à-Terre and some terrified Chouans. Hulot thought that he saw, as he looked between the heads that crowded about the young man, a broad red ribbon upon a half-open jacket. The commandant's eyes, attracted first of all by that royal decoration, which was at that time completely forgotten, suddenly fell upon a face which he soon lost sight of, being compelled by the exigencies of the battle to look after the welfare and the evolutions of his little troop. So it was that he hardly caught a glimpse of a pair of gleaming eyes whose color escaped him, fair hair, and refined features bronzed by the sun. He was impressed, however, by the resplendent whiteness of a bare neck, set off by a black cravat, tied carelessly in a loose knot. The spirited, energetic manner of the young officer was soldierly after the manner of those who demand a certain amount of conventional romance in a battle. His well-gloved hand waved in the air a sword that gleamed in the sun. His countenance denoted at once refinement and force. His conscientious exaltation, heightened by the charms of youth and by distinguished manners, made the *émigré* a delectable image of the French nobility. His appearance was in striking contrast to Hulot's,



who, not four paces away, presented a living image of the energetic Republic for which the old soldier was fighting ; while his stern face, his blue uniform with worn red lapels, the blackened epaulets hanging behind his shoulders, well depicted his character and his aspirations.

The young man's graceful attitude and expression did not escape Hulot, who cried, as he struggled to reach him :

“ Come on, you ballet-dancer, come on and let me demolish you ! ”

The royalist leader, angered by this momentary disadvantage, started forward with a desperate rush ; but when his people saw him risking his life thus, they all threw themselves upon the Blues. Suddenly a sweet, clear voice rang out above the uproar of the battle :

“ This way, Saint Lescure is dead ! Won't you avenge him ? ”

At those magic words, the onslaught of the Chouans became terrific, and the republican soldiers had great difficulty in holding their ground without breaking their order of battle.

“ If that wasn't a young man,” said Hulot to himself, falling back foot by foot, “ we shouldn't have been attacked. Did anyone ever see Chouans offer battle ? But so much the better, they won't kill us like dogs along the road.”

He raised his voice until the woods rang again :

“ Forward, quickly now, my comrades ! Are we going *to be made fools of* by brigands ? ”



The verb which we substitute for the one the commandant actually used is but a feeble equivalent; but veterans will be able to supply the genuine one, which certainly is more to the military taste.

“Gérard, Merle,” continued the commandant, “recall your men, form them in a battalion, re-form in the rear, fire on the dogs and make an end of them!”

Hulot’s order was executed with difficulty; for, when he heard his adversary’s voice, the young leader cried:

“By Sainte Anne d’Auray, don’t let them escape! Spread out, my *Gars!*”

When the two wings commanded by Gérard and Merle withdrew from the general mêlée, each of the little battalions was followed by a persistent body of Chouans much superior in numbers. The old goat-skins surrounded Merle’s and Gérard’s men on all sides, setting up afresh their blood-curdling cries, which resembled the howling of wild beasts.

“Hold your tongues, *messieurs*, we can’t hear one another kill!” cried Beau-Pied.

This jest revived the courage of the Blues. Instead of concentrating their efforts on a single point, the Republicans defended themselves at three different points on the plateau of La Pèlerine, and the roar of the musketry awoke all the echoes of those valleys but now so calm and peaceful. The victory might have remained undecided for hours to come, or the struggle have come to an end for lack of combatants. Blues and Chouans displayed equal

courage. The frenzy of both parties was increasing from moment to moment, when, in the distance, the faint beating of a drum was heard; and judging from its direction, the body of men whose approach it indicated seemed to be crossing the valley of Couësnon.

“It’s the National Guard of Fougères!” cried Gudin in a loud voice; “Vannier must have met them.”

At this exclamation, which reached the ear of the young leader of the Chouans and his ferocious aide-de-camp, the Royalists made a backward movement, soon checked by a bestial yell from Marche-à-Terre. In obedience to two or three orders issued in undertones by the leader and transmitted by Marche-à-Terre to the Chouans in Bas Breton, they effected their retreat with a degree of skill that disconcerted the Republicans and their commandant. The sturdiest of the Chouans drew up in the first rank, presenting a respectable front, behind which the wounded and the rest of their force withdrew to load their guns. Suddenly, with the agility of which Marche-à-Terre had already furnished an example, the wounded clambered up to the crest of the bank that flanked the road on the right, and were followed by half of the Chouans, who climbed it rapidly to take possession of the ridge, showing the Blues nothing but their active heads above the bushes. There they made a rampart of the trees, and directed their fire on what remained of the escort, who, in obedience to Hulot’s repeated orders, had

rapidly formed in line, in order to present a front on the road of equal strength to that of the Chouans. The latter fell back slowly, contesting every inch and wheeling in such a way as to be protected by the fire of their comrades. When they reached the ditch by the roadside they too climbed the high bank, whose crest was held by their friends, and joined them there, bravely sustaining the fire of the Republicans, who fired with such good effect that the ditch was filled with bodies. The men at the top of the embankment replied with a no less deadly fire. At that moment the National Guard of Fougères came upon the battlefield at full speed, and their presence put an end to the affair. The National Guards and some excited soldiers were already crossing the ditch to plunge into the woods ; but the commandant shouted to them in his martial voice :

“ Do you want to be shot down in there ? ”

Thereupon they rejoined the Republican battalion, which was left in possession of the field, not, however, without great loss. All the old hats were placed on the bayonet points, the muskets were raised in the air, and twice the troops shouted as with one voice : “ *Vive la République !* ” Even the wounded sitting by the roadside partook of the enthusiasm, and Hulot grasped Gérard’s hands, saying :

“ These fellows are what they call comrades, eh ? ”

Merle was entrusted with the duty of burying the

dead in a ravine by the road. Some of the other soldiers attended to carrying the wounded. Horses and carts from the neighboring farms were put in requisition, and the sufferers were placed therein upon the clothes of the dead. Before they began their march, the National Guard of Fougères turned over to Hulot a severely wounded Chouan whom they had captured at the foot of the steep slope up which his comrades had escaped; he had fallen back, betrayed by his failing strength.

"Thanks for your assistance, citizens," said the commandant. "*Tonnerre de Dieu!* we might have had a bad quarter of an hour but for you. Look out for yourselves! the war has begun. Adieu, my good fellows."

Hulot then turned to the prisoner.

"What's your general's name?" he asked.

"The Gars."

"Whom do you mean? Marche-à-Terre?"

"No, the Gars."

"Where did the Gars come from?"

To that question the King's Chasseur, whose harsh, savage features were distorted by pain, made no reply, but took his rosary and began to repeat prayers.

"The Gars is that young *ci-devant* with the black cravat, I suppose? He was sent hither by the tyrant and his allies, Pitt and Coburg—"

At those words the Chouan, whose ideas were limited in extent, raised his head proudly and exclaimed:

“Sent by God and the king!”

He uttered the words with an energy that exhausted his strength. The commandant realized the difficulty of questioning a dying man, whose whole appearance denoted ignorant fanaticism, and he turned his head away with a frown. Two soldiers, friends of those whom Marche-à-Terre had so brutally despatched with a blow of his whip at the roadside—for they had died there—fell back a few steps, took aim at the Chouan, whose fixed eyes did not fall before their raised musket barrels, fired upon him point-blank, and he fell. When the soldiers approached to strip him, he cried again in a loud voice :

“*Vive le roi!*”

“Yes, yes, you rascal,” said Clef-des-Cœurs, “go and eat buckwheat cake with your blessed Virgin. Here he yells: ‘*Vive le tyran!*’ in our faces, when we thought he was done for!”

“Here are the brigand’s papers, commandant,” said Beau-Pied.

“Oho!” cried Clef-des-Cœurs, “just come and look at this foot soldier of the good Lord, with the colors on his stomach!”

Hulot and several soldiers drew near the Chouan’s entirely nude body, and saw on his breast a sort of tattooing of a bluish shade, representing a blazing heart. It was the rallying sign of the members of the fraternity of the *Sacred Heart*. Beneath the drawing Hulot read: *Marie Lambrequin*, doubtless the Chouan’s name.

“ You see, Clef-des-Cœurs ! ” said Beau-Pied. “ Well, it would take you a hundred decades to guess the purpose of that decoration. ”

“ What do I know about the pope’s uniforms ! ” retorted Clef-des-Cœurs.

“ Miserable beetle-crusher, will you never learn anything ? ” returned Beau-Pied. “ Don’t you see that they promised this dandy he should be born again, and he had his gizzard painted on his breast to identify him ? ”

Even Hulot himself could not refrain from joining in the general hilarity that greeted this sally, which was not without some foundation. By that time Merle had finished burying the dead and the wounded had been arranged as comfortably as possible in two carts by their comrades. The other soldiers, falling in in two files beside these improvised ambulances, descended the other side of the mountain toward the province of Maine, having at their feet the lovely valley of La Pèlerine, the rival of Couësnon. Hulot, with his two friends Gérard and Merle, followed his soldiers at a slow pace, hoping to reach Ernée without mishap, where the wounded could be cared for. This battle, almost unknown amid the great events which were in store for France, took the name of the place where it was fought. It aroused some attention, however, in the West, where the people, being deeply interested in this second appeal to arms, noticed a change in the way in which the Chouans renewed the war. Formerly they would not have attacked such large

detachments. According to Hulot's conjectures, the young Royalist he had noticed must be the Gars, the new general whom the princes had sent to France, and who, according to the custom of royalist leaders, concealed his title and his name beneath one of those sobriquets called *noms de guerre*. That circumstance made the commandant as anxious after his disastrous victory as when he first suspected the ambush; several times he turned and looked back at the plateau of La Pèlerine, which they were leaving behind and from which still came, at intervals, the muffled sound of the drums of the National Guard who were marching down into the valley of Couësnon while the Blues marched down into the valley of La Pèlerine.

"Can either of you," he said abruptly to his two friends, "fathom the motive of the Chouans' attack? To them, musket shots are an article of commerce and I don't as yet see what profit they have made on these. They have lost at least a hundred men, and we," he added, drawing back his right cheek and winking, as if to smile, "haven't lost sixty. *Tonnerre de Dieu!* I don't understand the speculation. The rascals might have avoided attacking us, for we should have passed along like letters in the mail, and I don't see what good it did them to make holes in our men."

And he pointed sadly to the two cartloads of wounded.

"Perhaps they wanted to bid us good-day," he added.

"But, commandant, they got our hundred and fifty greenhorns," suggested Merle.

"If the recruits had hopped into the woods like frogs, we wouldn't have gone to fish 'em out, especially after they had given us a volley," rejoined Hulot.—No, no," he added, "there's something underneath it all."

He turned again toward La Pèlerine.

"Stay," he cried, "see!"

Although the three officers were already at a considerable distance from the fatal plateau, their trained eyes easily distinguished Marche-à-Terre and some other Chouans, who had taken possession of it after them.

"Forward, double quick!" cried Hulot to his men, "start up and make your horses move faster than that. Are their legs frozen? Have they come from Pitt and Coburg too?"

His words caused the little troop to move rapidly forward.

"As for the mystery, which seems to me too obscure to pierce, God grant, my friends," he said to the two officers, "that it be not unravelled with musket balls at Ernée! I greatly fear we shall learn that the Mayenne road is intercepted by the subjects of the king."





The strategic problem that made Commandant Hulot's moustache bristle, was causing no less anxiety at the same moment to the men he had seen on the crest of La Pèlerine. As soon as the sound of the drum of the Fougères National Guard had died away, and Marche-à-Terre saw that the Blues were at the foot of the long descent, he cheerily gave the cry of the screech-owl, and the Chouans reappeared, but in smaller numbers. Some of them probably were engaged in caring for the wounded in the village of La Pèlerine, which lies on the Couësson slope of the mountain. Two or three leaders of the King's Chasseurs were among those who joined Marche-à-Terre.

Four yards away, the young noble sat on a block of granite, apparently absorbed by the numerous thoughts incident to the difficulties which his enterprise already presented. Marche-à-Terre made a sort of screen with his hand to protect his eyes from the glare of the sun and gazed sadly at the road the Republicans were following across the valley of La Pèlerine. With his small, piercing black eyes, he tried to make out what was taking place on the opposite slope of the valley.

"The Blues will intercept the messenger," said, in a fierce tone, that one of the leaders who stood nearest to Marche-à-Terre.

"By Sainte Anne d'Auray, why did you make us fight?" demanded another. "To save your own skin?"

Marche-à-Terre darted a venomous glance at the questioner and struck the ground with the butt of his heavy carbine.

"Am I the chief?" he asked.

Then, after a pause:

"If you had all fought as I did, not one of the Blues would have escaped," he added, pointing to the remains of Hulot's detachment. "Then perhaps the wagon would have got here."

"Do you suppose," said a third, "that they would have thought of sending an escort with it or detaining it if we had let them go their way quietly? You wanted to save your dog's skin, because you didn't think the Blues had started. For the good health of his own muzzle, he's made the rest of us bleed," added the orator, turning to the others, "and what's more, we shall lose twenty thousand francs in good gold."

"Muzzle yourself!" cried Marche-à-Terre, stepping back three paces and taking aim at his assailant. "You don't hate the Blues but you love gold. You shall die without confession, like a damned villain who hasn't been to communion this year!"

The insult angered the Chouan to such a point that the color left his cheeks and a low growl issued

from his lips as he prepared to take aim at Marche-à-Terre. The young chief darted between them, knocked their carbines from their hands with the barrel of his own rifle and demanded an explanation of the dispute, for the conversation had been carried on in Bas-Breton with which he was not familiar.

"Monsieur le Marquis," said Marche-à-Terre, "it's all the shabbier of them to bear me a grudge, for I left Pille-Miche behind and he may be able to save the carriage from the robbers' claws."

As he spoke he pointed to the Blues, who, in the eyes of those faithful servants of the altar and the throne, were, one and all, murderers of Louis XVI., and brigands.

"What!" cried the young man angrily, "are you staying on here to rob a carriage, you cowards, who couldn't win a victory in the first battle in which I have led you! But how could anyone triumph with such purposes in view? Are the defenders of God and the king mere highwaymen? By Sainte Anne d'Auray! we have to make war on the Republic, not on diligences. Those who are guilty of such disgraceful deeds from this time on, will not receive absolution and will not share in the favors reserved for the king's worthy servitors."

A low muttering arose among those who listened. It was easy to see that the new leader's authority, so difficult to establish over those undisciplined hordes, was seriously threatened. The young man, who had not failed to observe that indication, was al-

ready casting about for some way to save the honor of his position, when the silence was broken by the rapid trot of a horse. All heads were turned in the direction in which the newcomer might be expected to appear. It was a young woman riding astride a small Breton horse, which she urged to a gallop in order to reach the group of Chouans more quickly, when she saw the young man among them.

"What's the matter here?" she asked, looking from the Chouans to their leader.

"Would you believe, madame, that they are waiting for the diligence from Mayenne to Fougères, with the purpose of robbing it, although we have just had a skirmish to release our Gars from Fougères, which has cost us many men, and even then we failed to wipe out the Blues?"

"Well, where's the harm?" asked the young woman, who, with a woman's natural tact, divined the secret of the scene at once. "You have lost some men, but we shall never lack men. The messenger carries money, and we shall always lack that! We will bury our men, who will go to Heaven, and we will take the money, which will go into all these brave fellows' pockets. Where's the difficulty?"

The Chouans signified their approval of these words by a unanimous smile.

"Is there nothing in all this that makes you blush?" replied the young man in a low tone. "Are you in such need of money that you must take it on the highroads?"

"I am so famished for it, marquis, that I believe I would put my heart in pawn if it weren't taken," she said, with a coquettish smile. "But where do you come from, pray, to suppose you can make use of Chouans without letting them pillage a Blue or two here and there? Don't you know the saying: *As big a thief as a screech-owl*? And what is a Chouan, pray? Besides," she added, raising her voice, "isn't it just? Haven't the Blues taken all the Church's property and ours?"

"Another murmur, very different from the growl with which the Chouans had answered the marquis, greeted these words. The young man, whose brow was growing darker, thereupon led the young lady aside and said to her with the sharp displeasure of a man of good breeding:

"Will those gentlemen come to La Vivetière on the appointed day?"

"Yes," she replied, "all of them, the *Intimé*, Grand-Jacques and perhaps Ferdinand."

"Permit me then to return; for I cannot sanction such acts of brigandage by my presence. Yes, madame, I said acts of brigandage. There may be something noble about being robbed, but—"

"Very well," she broke in, interrupting him, "I shall have your share and I thank you for turning it over to me. A little extra prize money will do me a great deal of good. My mother is so slow about sending me money that I am in despair."

"Adieu!" cried the marquis. And he disappeared; but the young lady hurried after him.

“Why don’t you stay with me?” she asked, with the half-despotic, half-caressing glance with which women who have rights over a man can so fully express their wishes.

“Aren’t you going to pillage the carriage?”

“Pillage?” she rejoined, “what a strange expression! Let me explain—”

“Not a word,” he said, taking her hands and kissing them with the superficial gallantry of a courtier.—“Listen,” he continued after a pause, “if I should stay here during the capture of the diligence, our men would kill me, for I would—”

“You wouldn’t kill any of them,” she rejoined hastily, “for they would bind your hands, with the consideration due to your rank, and, after levying a contribution on the Republicans sufficient to provide for their equipment and their subsistence and to purchase powder, they would obey you blindly.”

“And you want me to command here? If my life is necessary to the cause I defend, permit me to save the honor of my authority. If I retire I can remain in ignorance of this cowardly performance. I will return and accompany you.”

He walked swiftly away. The young lady listened to his retreating footsteps with evident displeasure. When the rustling of dried leaves had gradually died away, she remained for a moment lost in thought, then returned in great haste to the Chouans. She made a disdainful gesture and said to Marche-à-Terre, who assisted her to dismount:

“That young man wants to make war on the Republic according to military rules!—ah, well! a few hours from now he’ll change his mind.—How he treated me!” she said to herself after a pause.

She sat down upon the stone the marquis had just quitted, and awaited in silence the arrival of the carriage. Among the most remarkable phenomena of that epoch was the case of this young lady of noble birth, impelled by violent passions to throw herself into the struggle of the monarchy against the spirit of the age, and spurred on by the vivacity of her emotions to acts in which, so to speak, she was not wittingly an accomplice, therein resembling so many others who acted under the impulse of mental exaltation, often fruitful of great things. Like her, many women played parts, some heroic, some blameworthy, in this tumult. The Royalist cause found no emissaries more devoted or more active than these women, but none of the heroines of that party expiated the errors into which their devotion led them, or the misery incident to situations from which their sex should debar them, more cruelly than this lady, as she sat upon the granite boulder, with despair in her heart, unable to withhold her admiration for the young leader’s noble disdain and loyalty to his convictions. Insensibly she fell into a deep reverie. Bitter memories made her long for the innocence of her early years, and regret that she had not fallen a victim to the Revolution, whose victorious progress could not now be arrested by such weak hands as hers.

The carriage which was in a measure responsible for the attack of the Chouans, had left the little town of Ernée some moments before the skirmish between the two parties. Nothing depicts a country more accurately than the condition of its social mechanism. In that connection, this carriage deserves honorable mention. The Revolution itself had not the power to destroy it, it is still in use in our day. When Turgot redeemed the exclusive privilege a company had obtained from Louis XIV. of carrying passengers all over the kingdom, and instituted the enterprises known as *Turgotines*, the provinces were flooded with the old chariots of Messieurs de Vorges and Chanteclair and the widow Lacombe. One of those wretched vehicles opened communications between Mayenne and Fougères. Some obstinate conservatives had long ago, by antiphrasis, given it the name of *la turgotine*, either in imitation of Paris or in detestation of a minister who attempted innovations. This *turgotine* was a rickety cabriolet with two very high wheels, in which two persons inclined to be corpulent would have found it difficult to sit. As the narrow dimensions of the frail machine limited its interior capacity to two persons, and as the box which formed the driver's seat was reserved exclusively for the use of the mail, if travellers had any luggage, they were compelled to hold it between their legs, already terribly cramped in their little box which was not unlike a pair of bellows in shape. Its original color and that of the wheels, furnished an insoluble enigma to travellers.



Two leather curtains, still unmanageably stiff despite their long service, were supposed to shelter the sufferers from rain and cold. The driver, sitting on a bench like that of the meanest Parisian vans, was forced to join in the conversation by reason of his position between his two-legged and his four-legged victims. The equipage bore a curious resemblance to a decrepit old man who has passed safely through a goodly number of catarrhal fevers and apoplectic strokes, and whom death seems to respect; it groaned as it moved and at times fairly shrieked. Like a traveller overtaken by drowsiness, it swayed from side to side and backward and forward, as if trying to offset the violent movements of the two little Breton horses that dragged it over a passably rough road. This monument of a bygone age contained three travellers, who, as they left Ernée, where they had changed horses, continued a conversation with the driver, begun before reaching the town.

“How do you suppose the Chouans would dare show themselves around here?” the driver was saying. “They just told me at Ernée that Com-mandant Hulot hasn’t left Fougères yet.”

“Ah! my friend,” replied the younger of the travellers, “you risk only your carcass! If you had three hundred crowns about you, as I have, and were known to be a good patriot, you wouldn’t be so calm!”

“You talk a good deal at all events,” retorted the driver, shaking his head.

“Having counted the sheep, the wolf eats them,” observed the second passenger.

He was a man apparently about forty years of age, dressed in black, in all probability a priest of the neighborhood. He had an immense double chin and his florid complexion pointed to the clerical profession. Although short and stout, he displayed considerable agility whenever he was called upon to enter or leave the carriage.

“Are you one of the Chouans?” cried he of the three hundred crowns, whose handsome goatskin hid trousers of excellent cloth and a very neat jacket, which indicated a well-to-do farmer. “By the soul of Saint Robespierre, I swear that you would be warmly received—”

He looked with his gray eyes from the driver to the passenger, pointing to two pistols in his belt.

“The Bretons aren’t afraid of those things,” said the priest scornfully. “Besides, do we look as if we wanted your money?”

Every time that the word money was pronounced the driver became silent, and the priest had just enough wit to suspect that the patriot had money of his own and that their driver had some in his charge.

“Have you a load to-day, Coupiau?” queried the abbé.

“Oh! I’ve got nothing, as you might say, Monsieur Gudin,” the driver replied.

Abbé Gudin, having scrutinized the faces of the patriot and Coupiau, found them equally imperturbable.

"So much the better for you," the patriot replied; "in that case I can take measures to save my own property if anything goes wrong."

Such a barefaced assertion of the right to dictate, offended Coupiau, who retorted bluntly:

"I'm the master of my carriage, and so long as I take you—"

"Are you a patriot? are you a Chouan?" queried his adversary hastily, cutting him short.

"Neither one nor the other," replied Coupiau. "I'm a postilion, and, what's more, a Breton; therefore I don't fear Blues or gentlemen."

"You mean highwaymen," retorted the patriot, ironically.

"They only take back what's been taken from them," said the priest quickly.

The two passengers looked at each other to the very whites of their eyes—if we may venture to use that expression. There was in the depths of the vehicle a third passenger, who preserved the most profound silence throughout this discussion. The driver, the patriot, even Gudin himself, paid no attention whatever to this mute personage. He was, in truth, one of those inconvenient, unsociable travellers who behave in a public conveyance like calves, journeying resignedly, with feet tied, to the nearest market. They begin by taking possession

<sup>1</sup>Coupiau said: "I don't fear Blues or *gentilshommes*." The retort was: "You mean *gens-pille-hommes*:"—a play upon words that cannot be translated.

of all the space to which they are legally entitled and end by going to sleep, without respect for anything human, on their neighbor's shoulder. The patriot, Gudin and the driver had left him to himself therefore on the strength of his slumber, after convincing themselves that it was useless to speak to a man whose expressionless face told of a life passed in measuring off yards of cloth, and an intellect concerned exclusively in selling them for more than they cost. The fat little fellow, rolled up in his corner, opened his china-blue eyes from time to time and gazed at each speaker in turn with expressions of doubt, dread and suspicion, during their discussion. But he seemed to be afraid of his travelling companions only and to worry but little about the Chouans. When he looked at the driver, you would have said they were brother freemasons. At that moment the fusillade on La Pèlerine began. Coupiau, sadly disconcerted, stopped his horses.

"Oho!" said the priest, who seemed to understand what was taking place, "it's a serious engagement, there are a good many men at work."

"The embarrassing thing, Monsieur Gudin, is to know who'll come out ahead!" cried Coupiau.

At this crisis, all the faces were unanimous in their anxious expression.

"Let's drive the carriage into that inn yard," said the patriot, "and we can hide in the inn until we know the result of the battle."

This suggestion seemed so judicious that Coupiau

adopted it. The patriot helped the driver to hide the carriage from every eye behind a pile of wood. The pretended priest seized an opportunity to whisper to Coupiau :

“Has he really any money ?”

“Well, Monsieur Gudin, if what he has should pass into your Reverence’s pockets, they wouldn’t be very heavy.”

The Republicans, in haste to reach Ernée, passed the inn without stopping. At the sound of their hurried steps, Gudin and the innkeeper, impelled by curiosity, went as far as the courtyard gate to look at them. Suddenly the stout priest ran up to a soldier who was a little behind the others.

“Well, Gudin, pig-headed rascal,” he cried, “so you’re with the Blues ! My child, can you think of such a thing ?”

“Yes, uncle,” the corporal replied, “I have sworn to defend France.”

“What’s that ? wretched boy, you are destroying your soul !” said the uncle, trying to awaken in his nephew the religious sentiments that are so powerful in the Breton heart.

“If the king had taken his place at the head of his armies, uncle, I don’t say that—”

“Imbecile, who said anything about the king ? Does your Republic give away abbeys ? It has overturned everything. What do you expect to gain ? Stay with us ; we shall triumph some day or other, and you will be made a councillor in some parliament.”

“Parliament?” echoed Gudin in a mocking tone! “Adieu, uncle!”

“You shan’t have three sous from me,” said the uncle angrily. “I disinherit you!”

“Thanks,” said the Republican.

They separated. The fumes of the cider poured into Coupiau by the patriot while the little troop was passing, completely obscured the driver’s intellect; but he awoke in high feather when the inn-keeper, having made inquiries as to the result of the skirmish, announced that the Blues had had the advantage. Coupiau thereupon took the road once more, and his vehicle soon appeared in the depths of the valley of La Pèlerine, whence could be seen the plateaus of Maine and of Bretagne, like the wreckage of a ship floating on the waves after a tempest.

When the Blues reached the summit of the hill up which they were then climbing, and from which La Pèlerine was still visible in the distance, Hulot turned and looked to see if the Chouans were still there; the sun, shining on their gun-barrels, pointed them out to him like so many glistening points. As he cast one last backward glance on the valley he was leaving to enter the valley of Ernée, he fancied that he could distinguish Coupiau’s equipage on the high road.

“Isn’t that the Mayenne carriage?” he asked his two friends.

The officers, turning their eyes on the old *turgo-tine*, recognized it perfectly.

“Well, how does it happen that we didn’t meet it?” said Hulot.

They looked at each other in silence.

“Still another enigma!” cried the commandant.

“I begin to suspect the truth however.”

At that moment Marche-à-Terre, who also recognized the *turgotine*, pointed it out to his comrade, and their universal joyous exclamations aroused the young lady from her reverie. She came forward and saw the vehicle approaching the slope of La Pèlerine with fatal rapidity. The ill-fated *turgotine* soon reached the plateau. The Chouans, who had concealed themselves anew, pounced upon their prey with greedy celerity. The silent traveller crouched in the back part of the carriage and tried to look like a package.

“Good!” cried Coupiau from his box, pointing to the peasant, “you scented this patriot fellow here; he has gold, a bag full of it!”

The Chouans greeted these words with a general roar of laughter and shouted:

“Pille-Miche! Pille-Miche! Pille-Miche!”

Amid the laughter, to which Pille-Miche himself replied like an echo, Coupiau climbed down shamefacedly from his seat. When the famous Cibot, called Pille-Miche, assisted his neighbor to alight, a respectful murmur arose on all sides.

“It’s Abbé Gudin!” cried several men.

At that respected name all hats were removed, the Chouans knelt before the priest and asked his blessing, which the abbé gravely bestowed upon them.

"He would deceive Saint Peter and steal the keys of Paradise," he said, laying his hand on Pille-Miche's shoulder. "Except for him, the Blues would have intercepted us."

But when he caught sight of the young lady, Abbé Gudin went and spoke with her a few steps apart. Marche-à-Terre, who had hurriedly opened the box seat of the cabriolet, held up with savage glee, a bag whose shape indicated that it contained rolls of gold. He did not long delay making a division, each Chouan received his share with such scrupulous fairness that not the slightest question arose over the division. Then he walked toward the young lady and the priest, and handed them about six thousand francs.

"Can I conscientiously accept it, Monsieur Gudin?" said she, feeling the need of some sanction.

"How now, madame? Has not the Church heretofore approved the confiscation of the property of Protestants? With the stronger reason then, that of rebels, who deny God, destroy chapels and persecute the religion."

Abbé Gudin added example to precept by accepting without scruple the novel form of tithe Marche-à-Terre offered him.

"However," he added, "I can now devote all that I possess to the defence of God and the king: my nephew has gone with the Blues!"

Coupiau was wringing his hands and crying out that he was ruined.



"Come with us," said Marche-à-Terre, "you shall have your share."

"But people will think I meant to allow myself to be robbed, if I go back without any signs of violence."

"Is that all you want?" said Marche-à-Terre.

He gave a signal and the *turgotine* was riddled with bullets. At that unexpected volley, the old carriage gave forth such a piteous shriek, that the Chouans, being naturally superstitious, recoiled in terror; but Marche-à-Terre had seen the taciturn passenger's pale face leap up and fall back in the back corner.

"You have still another chicken in your coop?" he said in an undertone to Coupiau.

Pille-Miche, who overheard the question, winked significantly.

"Yes," replied the driver, "but I make it a condition of my enlisting with you fellows that you let me take that good man safe and sound to Fougères. I promised to do it in the name of Sainte d'Auray."

"Who is it?" demanded Pille-Miche.

"I can't tell you," Coupiau replied.

"Let him alone then!" rejoined Marche-à-Terre, nudging Pille-Miche with his elbow; "he's sworn by Sainte Anne d'Auray, so he must keep his oath."

"But don't go down the mountain too fast," said the Chouan to Coupiau, "we'll overtake you, I'll tell you why. I want to see your passenger's phiz, and we'll give him a passport."

At that moment they heard a horse galloping swiftly toward them from La Pèlerine. Soon the young nobleman appeared. The lady hastily concealed the bag she held in her hand.

"You can keep that money without scruple," said the young man, pulling her arm from behind her back. "Here's a letter for you that I found among those awaiting me at La Vivetière ; it is from your mother."

Glancing at the Chouans who were returning from the woods, then at the carriage going down into the valley of Couësson, he added :

"Notwithstanding my diligence I didn't arrive in time ! God grant that I am mistaken in my suspicions !"

"It's my poor mother's money !" cried the lady, after she had broken the seal of the letter, whose first words drew that exclamation from her.

A stifled laugh was heard among the woods. Even the young man could not repress a smile when he saw her holding in her hand the bag that contained her share in the proceeds of the theft of her own money. She began to laugh herself.

"Well, marquis, God be praised ! for this once I come off without blame," she said to the young chief.

"You deal lightly with everything, I see, even with your remorse," said he.

She blushed and looked at him with such genuine contrition, that he was disarmed. The abbé, polite-

ly but with an equivocal expression, returned the tithe he had just received; then he followed the young officer, who walked toward the winding path by which he had come. Before joining them, the young lady beckoned to Marche-à-Terre, who came to her side.

"You must go on ahead from Mortagne," she said in an undertone. "I know that the Blues are to send a large sum in specie to Alençon very soon, to meet the expense of the military preparations. If I allow your comrades to keep to-day's prize, I do so only on condition that they will find a way to make it up to me. Above all things, don't let the Gars know the object of your expedition, for he might oppose it; but, in case anything goes wrong, I will smooth him down."

"Madame," said the marquis, as she took her place *en croupe* behind him, leaving her horse for the abbé, "our friends in Paris write me to look out for ourselves. The Republic proposes to try to fight us by strategy and treachery."

"That's not bad," she replied. "Those fellows have some very good ideas! I shall be able to take part in the war and find worthy adversaries."

"I believe you!" cried the marquis. "Pichegru urges me to be wary and circumspect in my friendships of every kind. The Republic does me the honor to deem me more dangerous than all the Vendéans together, and relies upon my weaknesses to obtain possession of my person."

"Do you distrust me?" she demanded, striking

his heart with the hand with which she was clinging to him.

"If so, would you be here, madame," said he, turning his face toward her. She kissed his forehead.

"So Fouché's police will be more dangerous to us than the flying columns and the contre-Chouans," observed the priest.

"As you say, your Reverence."

"Ha! ha!" cried the lady, "pray, does Fouché intend to send women here against you? I await them," she added in a deep voice, after a brief pause.

Three or four gunshots away from the deserted plateau, which was now abandoned by the leaders, there took place one of those scenes which were of extremely frequent occurrence upon the highroads for some time thereafter. Pille-Miche and Marche-à-Terre had stopped the carriage again at a turn in the road just beyond the little village of La Pèlerine, Coupiau climbed down from his box after a feeble resistance. The silent passenger, having been exhumed from his hiding-place by the two Chouans, found himself kneeling in a clump of broom.

"Who are you?" demanded Marche-à-Terre in a threatening voice.

The passenger made no reply until Pille-Miche repeated the question, emphasizing it with a blow with the butt of his musket.

"I am Jacques Pinaud," he then said, with a glance at Coupiau, "a poor cotton merchant."

Coupiau shook his head, thinking that he did not

thereby break his oath. That gesture enlightened Pille-Miche, who brought his gun to bear on the traveller, while Marche-à-Terre propounded categorically this terrifying ultimatum :

“ You’re too fat to care much for the poor ! If you make us ask you your true name again, my friend Pille-Miche here, with a single shot, will earn the esteem and gratitude of your heirs.—Who are you ? ” he added after a pause.

“ I am D’Orgemont of Fougères.”

“ Aha ! ” cried the two Chouans.

“ I didn’t give your name, Monsieur d’Orgemont,” said Coupiau. “ The Holy Virgin is my witness that I told you not to do it.”

“ As you are Monsieur d’Orgemont of Fougères,” said Marche-à-Terre, with an ironically respectful air, “ we propose to allow you to go your way in peace. But, as you are neither a good Chouan nor a good Blue, although it was you that bought the property of the Abbey of Juvigny, you will be good enough to pay us,” added the Chouan, pretending to count up his comrades, “ three hundred crowns of six francs for your ransom. Neutrality is well worth that.”

“ Three hundred crowns of six francs ! ” repeated the unfortunate banker, Pille-Miche and Coupiau in chorus, but with widely different intonations.

“ Alas ! my dear monsieur,” said D’Orgemont, “ I am ruined. The *forced loan* of a hundred millions made by this devilish Republic, which rates me at an enormous figure, has drained me dry.”

“How much did your Republic call on you for?”

“A thousand crowns, my dear monsieur,” replied the banker, with a piteous expression, hoping to obtain a remission.

“If your Republic extorts forced loans from you to that extent, you see that you have everything to gain by joining us; our government is less expensive. Pray, is three hundred crowns too much for your skin?”

“Where shall I get them?”

“In your strong-box,” said Pille-Miche. “And see that your crowns aren’t clipped or we’ll clip your nails in the fire!”

“Where shall I pay them to you?” asked D’Orgemont.

“Your country house at Fougères isn’t far from Gibarry’s farm where my cousin Galope-Chopine lives, otherwise called Tall Cibot; you can hand them to him,” said Pille-Miche.

“That isn’t regular,” said D’Orgemont.

“What do we care for that?” retorted Marche-à-Terre. “Remember that if they’re not in Galope-Chopine’s hands within a fortnight, we’ll pay you a little visit that will cure you of the gout, if you have it in your feet.—As for you, Coupiau,” he continued turning to the driver, “your name after this will be *Mène-à-Bien*”—*Lead to Good*.

With that the two Chouans disappeared. The passenger returned to the carriage, which thanks to Coupiau’s whip, rattled away swiftly toward Fougères.

“If you’d had any weapons,” said Coupiau, “we might have defended ourselves a little better.”

“Idiot, I have ten thousand francs!” replied D’Orgemont, pointing to his heavy shoes. “Can a man defend himself with such a sum as that about him?”

Mène-à-Bien scratched his ear and looked behind, but his new associates had entirely disappeared.

Hulot and his soldiers stopped at Ernée to leave the wounded at the hospital in that little town; then they pushed on and reached Mayenne without any untoward incident. The next morning all the commandant’s doubts as to the progress of the messenger were solved, for intelligence was received of the robbery of the diligence. A few days later, the authorities sent to Mayenne a sufficient number of patriot conscripts to enable Hulot to fill up the ranks of his demi-brigade. Ere long, depressing rumors of the progress of the insurrection followed one another in rapid succession. The uprising was general in all the localities where the Vendéans and the Chouans had established the principal centres of incendiarism in the last war. In Bretagne the Royalists had obtained possession of Pontorson, in order to establish communication with the sea. The little town of Saint-James, between Pontorson and Fougères, had been taken by them and they seemed inclined to make it their headquarters for the moment, their centre of supplies and operations. From that point they could correspond without danger with Normandie and Morbihan. The subaltern

leaders were scouring the three provinces to arouse the partisans of the monarchy and give consistency and strength to their enterprise.

These manœuvres corresponded with the news from La Vendée, where the whole country was kept in a state of agitation by similar intrigues under the influence of four celebrated chiefs, Abbé Vernal, the Comte de Fontaine, Messieurs de Châtillon and Suzannet. The Chevalier de Valois, the Marquis d'Esgrignon, the Troisvilles were said to be their correspondents in the department of Orne. The real leader in the extended plan of operations, which was unfolded slowly but in a manner to cause serious apprehension, was the Gars, a name bestowed by the Chouans on Monsieur le Marquis de Montauran at the time of his debarkation. The information transmitted to the ministers by Hulot proved to be exact in every particular. The authority of this leader, sent from without, was instantly recognized. Indeed the marquis acquired sufficient influence over the Chouans to make them understand the real object of the war, and to convince them that the excesses of which they were frequently guilty, dishonored the noble cause they had embraced. The natural temerity, the courage, the self-possession, the great ability of the young nobleman raised the hopes of the enemies of the Republic and stirred the sombre excitement of those districts to such a point that even the least zealous coöperated in preparing to strike a decisive blow for the prostrate monarchy. Hulot received no reply



to the reiterated reports and requests he forwarded to Paris. That extraordinary silence denoted without doubt some new crisis in the affairs of the Revolution.

“I wonder if it’s the same with governmental matters as it is with requests for money,” said the old officer to his two friends; “do they throw all the petitions into the waste-basket?”

But the report of the magical return of General Bonaparte and the events of the 18th Brumaire, soon spread far and wide. Then the military commanders in the West understood the silence of ministers. Nevertheless, they were only the more impatient to be relieved from the responsibility that weighed upon them, and they became very curious to learn the measures that the new government proposed to take. When they heard that General Bonaparte had been chosen to be First Consul of the Republic, the troops were rejoiced beyond measure; for the first time they saw one of themselves placed in control of the nation’s affairs. France, which had made an idol of the young general, shivered with hope. The national energy revived. The capital, tired of the prevailing gloom, gave itself over to festivities and enjoyment, from which it had so long been weaned. The first acts of the Consulate were not calculated to weaken any hope, and the genius of liberty did not take alarm. The First Consul issued a proclamation to the people of the West. Those eloquent harangues to the masses, which were, so to speak, an invention

of Bonaparte, produced a prodigious effect in those days of patriotism and miracles. His voice rang through the world like the voice of a prophet, for not one of his proclamations had as yet been falsified by the result.

“CITIZENS,

“For the second time, impious war is kindling its fires in the departments of the West.

“The authors of these disturbances are traitors in the pay of England, or brigands who seek in civil discord naught but plunder and impunity for their misdeeds.

“To such men, the government owes neither indulgence nor a declaration of its principles.

“But there are citizens, dear to the heart of the country, who have been seduced by their wiles; to such citizens, enlightenment and the truth are due.

“Unjust laws have been promulgated and put in force; arbitrary acts have alarmed the security of the citizen and liberty of conscience; everywhere dangerous inscriptions on the roll of *émigrés* have affected good citizens; in short, some important principles of social order have been violated.

“The Consuls declare that liberty of worship being guaranteed by the Constitution, the law of 11th Prairial, year III., which allows citizens the use of buildings intended for religious worship, shall be put in force.

“The government will forgive: it will meet repentance with pardon, its indulgence will be absolute and unconditional; but it will strike down whoever, after this declaration, shall dare to resist the sovereignty of the nation.”

“Well,” said Hulot, after this consular harangue had been read in public, “is that paternal enough for you? And yet you’ll find that not a single Royalist brigand will change his opinion!”

The commandant was right. The proclamation served only to bind every man more tightly to his party. A few days later, Hulot and his colleagues received reinforcements. The new Minister of War wrote them that General Brune was assigned to the command of the troops in the west of France. Hulot, whose experience was well known, was vested temporarily with the command in the departments of Orne and Mayenne. Incredible activity was soon manifest in all the proceedings of the government. A circular from the Minister of War and the Minister of General Police announced that vigorous measures had been taken to crush the insurrection *at its root*, and entrusted for execution to the commanding officers of the military departments. But the Chouans and Vendéans had already taken advantage of the inaction of the Republic to inflame the country districts and take entire possession of them. Thereupon a new consular proclamation was issued. This time the general spoke to the troops :

“ SOLDIERS,

“ Only brigands, *émigrés* and hirelings of England remain in the West.

“ The army consists of more than sixty thousand brave men ; let me hear soon that the rebel leaders have ceased to live. Glory is acquired only by fatiguing toil ; if it could be acquired by maintaining headquarters in a great city, who would be without it ?

“ Soldiers, whatever rank you may hold in the army, the gratitude of the nation awaits you. To be worthy of it, you must defy the inclemency of the seasons, ice, snow, excessive

cold at night ; surprise your enemies at daybreak, and exterminate the vile wretches, the dishonor of the French name.

“ Make a short, sharp campaign ; be inexorable to the brigands, but maintain strict discipline.

“ National Guards, assist with your arms the efforts of the troops of the line.

“ If you know of any men among you who are partisans of the brigands, arrest them ! Let them find shelter nowhere from the soldier who pursues them ; and if there be traitors who dare to receive and defend them, let them die by their sides ! ”

“ What a fellow ! ” cried Hulot ; “ he’s just as he was in the army of Italy, he rings for mass and says it. That’s talking, eh ? ”

“ Yes, but he talks alone and in his own name,” said Gérard, beginning to take alarm at the results of the 18th Brumaire.

“ By the sacred sentry-box ! what difference does that make so long as he’s a soldier ? ” cried Merle.

A few steps away, several soldiers had gathered in a group in front of the proclamation affixed to the wall. But, as not one of them knew how to read, they looked at it, some with an indifferent air, others with curiosity, while two or three tried to find among the passers-by a citizen who had the look of a scholar.

“ Just look and see what that scrap of paper says, Clef-des-Cœurs,” said Beau-Pied slyly to his comrade.

“ It’s very easy to guess,” replied Clef-des-Cœurs.

At that all eyes were turned on the two friends, who were always ready to play their parts.

"Why, look," continued Clef-des-Cœurs, pointing to the top of the proclamation, where there was a rough vignette, on which, within a few days, the level of 1793 was replaced by a pair of compasses. "That means that we fellows must march straight ahead! They've put a pair of compasses there, always open; that's an emblem."

"It isn't becoming to you, my boy, to play the scholar! That's what they call a problem. I served in the artillery first," added Beau-Pied; "my officers didn't have anything else to eat but problems."

"It's an emblem."

"It's a problem."

"Let's bet on it!"

"What?"

"Your German pipe."

"Done!"

"Asking your pardon, adjutant, isn't that an emblem and not a problem?" said Clef-des-Cœurs to Gérard, who was pensively following Hulot and Merle.

"It's both," he replied gravely.

"The adjutant is laughing at us," said Beau-Pied. "That paper says that our general in Italy is promoted to consul, which is a fine rank, and that we're going to have capes and shoes."



## II

### FOUCHÉ'S IDEA

\*

Late in the month of Brumaire, one morning while Hulot was drilling his demi-brigade—the whole command being concentrated at Mayenne in obedience to orders from his superiors—a messenger from Alençon arrived with despatches, during the reading of which his face expressed the most intense annoyance.

“Come, forward!” he shouted angrily, putting the papers in the top of his hat. “Two companies will prepare to march with me to Mortagne. The Chouans are there.—You will accompany me,” he said to Merle and Gérard. “If I understand a word of my despatch, may I be ennobled! Perhaps I’m no better than an idiot, but never mind—forward! There’s no time to lose.”

“What is there so savage in that pouch, commandant?” said Merle, touching with the toe of his boot the official envelope of the despatch.

“ *Tonnerre de Dieu !* nothing, except that they’re making fools of us ! ”

When the commandant allowed that military expression, to which we have already called attention, to escape him, it always foreboded a tempest and the varying intonations of voice in which it was uttered were, to the demi-brigade, a sure thermometer of their leader’s patience ; and the old soldier’s frankness had made it so easy to read his mind, that the very drummers soon learned to know their Hulot by heart, by noticing the variations of the little grimace with which the commandant drew back his cheek and winked his eyes. On this occasion the tone of deep anger in which he spoke made his two friends silent and circumspect. Even the marks of the small-pox that seamed that warlike face looked deeper and his complexion darker than usual. His thick braided cue having fallen in front of one shoulder when he put on his three-cornered hat, Hulot threw it back so fiercely that the braids were disarranged. However, as he then stood motionless with fists clenched, arms tightly folded across his breast and bristling moustache, Gérard ventured to ask :

“ Do we start at once ? ”

“ Yes, if the knapsacks are filled,” he grumbled.

“ They are.”

“ Carry arms ! File left, forward, march ! ” shouted Gérard at a sign from his chief.

The drums took their places at the head of the two companies designated by Gérard. At the beat



of the drum, the commandant, who was lost in thought, seemed to awake, and he marched out of the town accompanied by his two friends, to whom he said not a word. Merle and Gérard exchanged glances several times as if to ask: "Will he keep us at a distance long?" And, as they marched, they stealthily watched Hulot, who continued to mutter vague words between his teeth. Several times the soldiers heard what sounded like oaths, but not one of them dared utter a word, for, when occasion required, they could all maintain the strict discipline to which the troopers formerly commanded by Bonaparte in Italy were accustomed. Most of them were, like Hulot himself, a part of what was left of the famous battalions that capitulated at Mayence under a promise that they should not be employed on the frontiers, and the army had dubbed them the *Mayençais*. It would be hard to find soldiers and officers who understood one another better.

On the day following their departure, Hulot and his two friends found themselves early in the morning on the Alençon road, about a league from the last named city toward Mortagne, where the road skirts the pastures watered by the Sarthe. Picturesque fields succeeded one another on the left, while, on the right, the dense woods, which are really an outlying part of the great forest of Menil-Broust, form, if we may venture to borrow the expression from the painter's language, a *set-off* to the lovely river landscape. The sides of the road are bordered by ditches, the dirt from which, being con-

stantly thrown back upon the fields, forms high banks crowned with *ajoncs*, the name given to the thorn-broom in the West. That plant, which grows in thick bushes, furnishes excellent winter fodder for horses and cattle ; but, until it was harvested, the Chouans used to conceal themselves behind the dark green clumps. Those banks and those clumps of thorn-broom, which tell the traveller that he is approaching Bretagne, made that part of the road, at the time of which we write, as dangerous as it was lovely. The perils which threatened travellers from Mortagne to Alençon and from Alençon to Mayenne were the cause of Hulot's departure from the latter place ; and there, at last, the secret of his indignation escaped him. He was escorting at the time, an old mail-coach drawn by post horses, which his tired soldiers compelled to move very slowly. The companies of Blues belonging to the garrison of Mortagne, who had escorted the tumble-down vehicle to the limit of their beat, where Hulot had met them to replace them in that service, justly called by the soldiers a patriotic *bore*, had returned to Mortagne and were visible in the distance like black spots. One of the old Republican's two companies marched a few paces behind the conveyance and the other in front. Hulot, who was walking with Merle and Gérard, half-way between the carriage and the advance guard, suddenly exclaimed :

“ *Mille tonnerres !* would you believe that the general sent us from Mayenne to escort the two petticoats in yonder old van ? ”

“Why, commandant, when we took up our position just now near the citizenesses,” replied Gérard, “you saluted them with what didn’t seem to me a very contemptuous air.”

“Ah! there’s the shame of it. To think that those *fops* in Paris urge us to take the greatest care of their damned women! Isn’t it a disgrace to make good, honest patriots like us dance attendance on a petticoat? For my part, I follow a straight road and I don’t like the way others zig-zag. When I saw that Danton had mistresses and Barras had mistresses, I said to them: ‘Citizens, when the Republic called on you to govern, it didn’t mean to authorize the amusements of the old régime.’ You’ll say that wives—Oh! men have wives! that’s true. Good comrades, you see, must have wives and good wives. But there’s no use talking when the danger has come. What good did it do to sweep away the abuses of the old days, if the patriots are going to begin them all again? Look at the First Consul, there’s a man for you; no women, always occupied with his affairs. I would bet my left moustache that he knows nothing about the foolish business they’ve set us at here.”

“Faith, commandant,” laughed Merle, “I saw the end of the nose of the young lady, who is crouching on the back seat of the coach, and I confess that I think anybody might, without shame, feel as I do, an itching to loiter around the carriage and try and manage a little conversation with the fair travellers.”

“Look out for yourself, Merle!” said Gérard.

"The hooded birds are attended by a citizen who is crafty enough to catch you in a trap."

"Who? that *dandy*, whose little eyes are constantly travelling from one side of the road to the other as if he saw Chouans there; that fop, whose legs you can hardly see, and who looks exactly like a duck sticking out of a pie when his horse's legs are hidden by the carriage! If that dodo ever prevents my caressing the pretty linnet—"

"Duck! linnet! Oh! my poor Merle, you have flying things on the brain. But don't trust the duck. His green eyes look to me as treacherous as a snake's and as cunning as those of a wife forgiving her husband. I distrust the Chouans less than these lawyers with faces like decanters of lemonade."

"Pshaw!" cried Merle gayly, "with the commandant's leave I'll risk it! That woman has eyes like stars, one can afford to stake everything to get a look at them."

"The youngster's caught," said Gérard to the commandant, "he is beginning to talk like an idiot."

Hulot grinned, shrugged his shoulders and replied:

"I advise him to sniff the soup before eating it."

"Good Merle," continued Gérard, judging from his slow pace that he was manœuvring to allow the coach to overtake him gradually, "what a light-hearted fellow he is! He's the only man I know who can laugh over a comrade's death without being accused of lack of feeling."

"He's the typical French soldier," said Hulot gravely.

“ Oh ! look at him pulling his epaulets well up on his shoulders so as to show them he’s a captain,” laughed Gérard ; “ as if rank cut any figure in such matters.”

The vehicle toward which the officer was gravitating did in fact contain two women, one of whom seemed to be the other’s servant.

“ These women always travel by twos,” said Hulot.

A short, thin man was riding by the carriage, sometimes in front, sometimes behind ; but, although he seemed to be in attendance upon the two privileged passengers, no one had as yet seen him speak to them. This silence, a manifestation of disdain or of respect, the numerous articles of baggage, the boxes of the lady whom the commandant called a *princess*,—everything, even to the costume of her mounted attendant, had contributed to stir Hulot’s bile. The male stranger’s costume was a perfect picture of the fashion which was responsible for the contemporary caricatures of the *dandy*. Let the reader fancy this individual arrayed in a coat with skirts so short in front that five or six inches of waistcoat were visible below them ; and so long behind that they resembled a cod-fish’s tail, a term which was used at this time to designate them. An enormous cravat was twisted around his neck so many times that the small head emerging from that labyrinth of muslin almost justified Captain Merle’s gastronomic simile. He wore tight-fitting trousers and boots *à la* Suvaroff. An immense blue and

white cameo did duty as a shirt pin. Two watch chains issued in parallel lines from his belt ; his hair, hanging in corkscrew curls on both sides of his face, almost concealed his forehead. Lastly, as a final embellishment, the collar of his shirt and his coat came up so high that his head seemed to be stuck like a bouquet in a paper horn. Add to these pitiful accessories, each of which clashed with every other, producing nothing like uniformity, the burlesque contrast of color in the yellow trousers, the red waistcoat, the cinnamon coat, and you will have a faithful picture of the supreme *bon ton* which all the dandies sought to attain at the beginning of the Consulate. This altogether singular costume seemed to have been invented as a test of gracefulness, and to prove that there is nothing so absurd that fashion will not bestow its sanction upon it. The horseman seemed to be about thirty years old, but in reality he was barely twenty-two ; perhaps his mature appearance was attributable to dissipation or to the dangers of the time. Despite his charlatan-like garb, his bearing betrayed a certain refinement of manner by which one could see that he was a man of good breeding.

When the captain approached the door of the vehicle, the dandy seemed to divine his purpose and favored it by slackening his horse's pace ; Merle, who had bestowed a sardonic glance upon him, encountered one of those impenetrable faces, accustomed by the vicissitudes of the Revolution to conceal every sort of emotion, even the most trivial. The

moment that the bent rim of the old three-cornered hat and the captain's epaulet were spied by the ladies, a voice of angelic sweetness asked :

“ Monsieur l'Officier, would you be kind enough to tell us where we are now ? ”

There is an inexpressible charm about a question asked by an unknown traveller of the fair sex, the smallest word seems to contain a whole adventure ; but if the woman solicits protection in any sense of the word, basing her claim thereto upon her weakness and upon her ignorance of affairs, is not every man slightly inclined to construct an impossible fable wherein he fancies himself a happy lover ? Thus the words “ Monsieur l'Officier,” the courteous tone of the question, caused a strange feeling of unrest in the captain's heart. He tried to examine the fair traveller, but was grievously disappointed, for a jealous veil concealed her features ; indeed he could hardly see her eyes, which shone through the gauze like onyxes in the sunshine.

“ You are now about a league from Alençon, madame.”

“ Alençon, already ! ”

And the unknown lady threw herself back or rather allowed herself to fall back into her seat and said nothing more.

“ Alençon ? ” repeated the other woman, apparently waking from a nap. “ You are going to see once more the country—”

She glanced at the captain and checked herself. Merle, disappointed in his hope of seeing the fair

stranger's face, set about examining her companion. She was a young woman of about twenty-six, a blonde, with a pretty figure and the fresh brilliant complexion characteristic of the women of Valognes, Bayeux and the neighborhood of Alençon. The expression of her blue eyes denoted firmness mingled with affectionateness rather than keen intelligence. She wore a common stuff dress. Her hair, unpretentiously brushed back beneath a small cap of the type worn by the women of Caux, gave a look of charming simplicity to her face. Her bearing, although it had not the conventional dignity of salons, was not devoid of the natural dignity of a modest young woman who can look back over her past life without finding a single cause for regret. At a glance, Merle recognized in her a lovely wild flower, which, although transplanted to the hothouses of Paris where so many withering rays of light and heat are concentrated, had lost nothing of its pure coloring or its rustic simplicity. The young woman's artless manner and the modesty of her glance apprized Merle that she desired no auditor. And, when he moved away, the two strangers began in undertones a conversation, the murmuring sound of which barely reached his ear.

"You started so hurriedly," said the young countrywoman, "that you didn't even take time to dress. You look like a fright! Even if we're going beyond Alençon we absolutely must stop there to dress you again."

"Oh! oh! Francine!" cried the stranger.



"I beg your pardon?"

"That's the third attempt you have made to learn the purpose and the goal of my journey."

"Have I said the slightest word to deserve that reproach?"

"Oh! I have noticed your little game. Candid, simple-minded creature that you are, you have taken to strategy a little, after my pattern. You begin to have a horror of being questioned. You are quite right, my child. Of all known ways of extorting a secret, that is, in my opinion, the most foolish."

"Very well," rejoined Francine, "as I can't conceal anything from you, tell me frankly, Marie, isn't your behavior enough to arouse the curiosity of a saint? Yesterday morning without a sou, to-day with your hands full of gold, they give you at Mortagne the mail-coach that was robbed whose driver was killed, you are escorted by government troops and followed by a man whom I consider your evil genius—"

"Who, Corentin?" queried the young stranger, pronouncing the two words in two different tones, laden with contempt which overflowed even in the gesture with which she pointed to the horseman. "Listen, Francine," she continued, "do you remember *Patriote*, that monkey I taught to imitate Danton, and that amused us so much?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Well, were you afraid of him?"

"He was chained."

"But Corentin is muzzled, my child."

"We used to play with Patriote for hours at a time, I know," said Francine, "but he always ended by playing us some mean trick."

At that Francine threw herself hastily back in the carriage beside her mistress, took her hands and caressed them coaxingly, saying in an affectionate voice :

"You have found me out, Marie, and still you don't answer. How, after your profound sadness that made me feel so bad, oh! so bad, can you within twenty-four hours become wild with gayety, as when you talked about killing yourself? What has caused this change? I have the right to ask you for some little account of your heart. It belongs to me before anybody else in the world, for nobody will ever love you more dearly than I do. Tell me, mademoiselle."

"Well, Francine, don't you see the secret of my gayety all about you? Look at the yellow tufts of those distant trees; not one of them resembles the others. Looking at them from this distance, wouldn't you say it was some old château tapestry? Look at those hedges behind which we may find Chouans at any moment. When I look at that thorn-broom I imagine I can see gun-barrels, I love this constantly increasing peril that surrounds us. Whenever the road looks particularly forbidding, I expect to hear reports: then my heart beats fast, and I feel a strange, unfamiliar sensation. It is neither the trembling of fear nor the thrill of pleasure; no, it is something more than either, it is the

stirring of everything that lives and moves within me, it is life ! Should I not be overjoyed to have a little animation come into my life ? ”

“ Oh ! you tell me nothing, cruel girl !—Holy Virgin,” added Francine, sorrowfully raising her eyes to the sky, “ to whom will she confess, if she keeps silent to me ? ”

“ Francine,” rejoined the stranger gravely, “ I cannot tell you what enterprise I have in mind. This time, it is horrible.”

“ Why do evil deliberately ? ”

“ What would you have ? I find myself thinking as if I were fifty and acting as if I were fifteen ! You have always been my reason, my poor child ; but in this affair I must stifle the voice of conscience. And,” she added after a pause, sighing as she spoke, “ I do not succeed. Now, how do you suppose that I can put myself in the hands of such a stern confessor as you ? ”

And she patted her hand softly.

“ Why ! when did I ever reprove you for anything ? ” cried Francine. “ Any evil you may do is forgiven. Yes, Sainte Anne d’Auray, to whom I pray so often for your welfare, would give you absolution for everything. And am I not here beside you, on this road, without knowing where you’re going ? ”

In her effusion of affection she kissed her hands.

“ You can leave me,” retorted Marie, “ if your conscience—”

“ Nonsense, hold your tongue, madame,” said

Francine, with a little offended pout. "Oh! won't you tell me?"

"I'll tell you nothing!" said the young lady in a decided tone. "But, understand this—I hate this undertaking more than I hate the man whose gilded tongue explained it to me. I wish to be frank, so I will confess that I should not have fallen in with their wishes, if I had not seen in this despicable farce a possibility of a combination of terror and love which tempted me. And then I did not want to go from this lower world without having culled the flowers I hope to find here, though I perish in the attempt! But remember, for the honor of my memory, that, if I had been happy, the sight of their great knife ready to fall on my neck would not have induced me to accept a part in this tragedy—for it is a tragedy. Now," she continued, with a gesture of disgust, "if it should be given up, I should throw myself instantly into the Sarthe; and it wouldn't be suicide, for I have never lived."

"Oh! Blessed Virgin of Auray, forgive her!"

"What are you afraid of? The vapid vicissitudes of domestic life do not kindle my passions, as you know. That is a bad thing for a woman; but my soul has fashioned for itself a more exalted sensibility, to endure sterner tests. I should have been, perhaps, a gentle creature like you. Why have I risen above or sunk below my sex? Ah! how lucky General Bonaparte's wife is! Look you, I shall die young, as I have already reached the point where I am not afraid to attend a party of pleasure

at which there is blood to drink, as poor Danton used to say. But forget what I say ; it is the woman of fifty who has been talking to you. Thank God ! the girl of fifteen will soon appear again.”

The young country girl shuddered. She alone knew her mistress's impetuous and excitable disposition ; she alone was initiated into the secrets of that soul rich in exalted ideas, into the sentiments of that lovely creature who, thus far, had seen life pass before her like an intangible shadow that she was always trying to seize. Having sown freely and reaped no harvest, this woman had remained a virgin ; but, annoyed by a multitude of thwarted desires, weary of a struggle without an adversary, she had now reached a point at which, in her despair, she preferred good to evil when it presented itself as a source of enjoyment, evil to good when it offered a touch of poesy, poverty to mediocrity as being something greater, the dark and unknown future of death to a life poor in hope or even in suffering. Never had so much powder been amassed to produce a spark, never such treasures for love to devour, in fine, never was daughter of Eve moulded with more gold in the clay. Francine watched like a terrestrial angel over this being in whom she adored absolute perfection, believing that she should fulfil a divine mission if she preserved her for the chorus of seraphim, whence she seemed to be excluded as an expiation for a sin of pride.

“ There's the Alençon steeple,” said the horseman, riding up to the carriage.

"I see it," replied the young lady curtly.

"Ah! yes," said he, drawing back with servile submission, despite his chagrin.

"Faster, faster," said the lady to the postilion. "Now there is nothing to fear. Go at a fast trot or a gallop, if you can. Aren't we on the pavements of Alençon?"

As they passed the commandant, she called to him in a sweet voice:

"We shall meet at the inn, commandant. Come and see me there!"

"That's it!" retorted the commandant. "'At the inn! Come and see me!' That's a fine way to talk to the commander of a demi-brigade!"

And he shook his fist at the carriage as it rolled rapidly along the road.

"Don't complain, commandant, she has your general's commission in her sleeve," laughed Corentin, who was trying to put his horse to a gallop to overtake the carriage.

"Ah! I won't allow myself to be made a fool of by those blockheads," grumbled Hulot to his two friends. "I'd rather throw a general's uniform into the ditch than earn it in a bed. What do those devils want? Can you people make anything out of it?"

"Oh! yes," said Merle, "I know that she's the loveliest woman I ever saw! I don't think you understand metaphor. Perhaps she's the First Consul's wife."

"Bah! the First Consul's wife is an old woman,

and that one is young," rejoined Hulot. "Besides, the orders I received from the minister tell me that her name is Mademoiselle de Verneuil. She's a *ci-devant*. Do you suppose I don't know all about it? Before the Revolution they all plied that trade; in those days a man became a colonel in double time and six motions; all he had to do was to say: *My heart!* to them two or three times."

While each soldier in the escort was opening his compasses, to use the commandant's expression, the miserable vehicle which did duty as a mail-coach had drawn up before the *Hôtel des Trois Maures*, situated in the middle of the main street of Alençon. The clatter of the unwieldy conveyance brought the landlord out on the doorstep. No one in Alençon could have anticipated that the mail-coach would stop at the *Trois Maures*; but the terrible occurrence at Mortagne caused it to be followed by such a crowd, that the two passengers, in order to evade the general curiosity, hurried into the kitchen, the inevitable reception-room in public-houses throughout the West. The landlord was about to follow them after looking over the carriage, when the postilion laid his hand on his arm.

"One moment, Citizen Brutus," said he, "there's an escort of Blues. As there's no driver nor any despatches, I am the one who brought the citizenesses to you; they'll doubtless pay like *ci-devant* princesses; and so—"

"And so we'll have a glass of wine together directly, my boy," said the host.

Having cast a glance around the smoke-blackened kitchen and at a table bloodstained by raw meats, Mademoiselle de Verneuil fled into the adjoining room as lightly as a bird, for she dreaded the sight and smell of the kitchen as much as the inquisitiveness of a slovenly chef and a little fat woman who were already gazing curiously at her.

"What are we going to do, wife?" said the host. "Who the devil could 'a' thought we'd have such a crowd in these days? That woman will lose patience before I can serve her a decent dinner. Faith, I have a good idea: as long as they're *comme il faut* folks, I'm going to propose to 'em to join the guest we have upstairs, eh?"

When he went in search of the new arrival, he found only Francine, to whom he said in a low voice, leading her to the farther end of the kitchen on the courtyard side, out of everybody's hearing:

"If you ladies wish to be served by yourselves, as I suppose you do, I have a very delicious meal all ready for a lady and her son. I don't believe they'll refuse to share their breakfast with you," he added mysteriously, "they're people of quality."

The host had hardly finished the last sentence when he felt a slight blow with a whip-handle on his back; he turned sharply around and saw behind him a short, thickset man who had emerged noiselessly from an adjoining cabinet, and whose appearance had frozen the fat woman, the chef and his scullion stiff with terror. The host turned pale as he looked. The little man shook away the hair that



entirely concealed his eyes and forehead, stood on tiptoe to reach the innkeeper's ear and said :

“ You know what the slightest imprudence or a denunciation would be worth to you, and what kind of money we pay for them. We are generous—”

He supplemented his words with a gesture which was a terrifying commentary thereon. Although the rotund body of the host prevented Francine from seeing this individual, she overheard a few words of his muttered sentences, and stood as if struck by lightning when she recognized the raucous tones of a Breton voice. Amid the general terror she darted toward the little man, but he, seeming to move with the agility of a wild beast, was already going out through a side door opening on the courtyard. Francine thought she must have been mistaken in her conjectures, for she saw only the black and tawny skin of a bear of medium size. She ran to the window in amazement. Through the smoke clouded glass she looked at the stranger who was walking slowly toward the stable. Before going in, he turned two black eyes up to the first floor of the inn, and then upon the mail-coach, as if he wished to make some important observation to a friend concerning that vehicle. Despite his skin garments, and aided by this movement which enabled her to see his face, as well as by his enormous whip and trailing gait—although he could be agile enough on occasion,—Francine recognized the Chouan called *Marche-à-Terre* ; she watched him, with some difficulty on account of the darkness of the stable, as he lay down

on the straw in a position from which he could see everything that took place in the inn. He was huddled up in such a way that the shrewdest spy, close at hand as well as at a distance, might easily have taken him for one of the great dogs that lie asleep, curled up like a ball, with their heads resting on their paws.

Marche-à-Terre's conduct satisfied Francine that the Chouan had not recognized her. In the delicate position in which her mistress was placed, she did not know whether she ought to be glad or sorry on that account. But the mysterious connection that existed between the Chouan's threatening remark and the host's suggestion to herself—which latter was a common enough occurrence among innkeepers, who always try to kill two birds with one stone,—pricked her curiosity; she left the dirty window through which she had been looking at the black shapeless mass that indicated the station occupied by Marche-à-Terre in the darkness, turned to the innkeeper and found him in the attitude of a man who has made a false step and does not know how to draw back. The Chouan's gesture had turned the poor man to stone. Everyone in the West was aware of the cruel refinements of torture with which the King's Chasseurs punished those who were suspected of nothing worse than indiscretion: and the host fancied he could already feel their knives on his neck. The chef looked with terror at the glowing coals of the fire at which they often *warmed* the feet of their denouncers. The

short, fat woman held a cooking knife in one hand, in the other a potato half peeled, and stared at her husband with a dazed expression. Even the little scullion was trying to fathom the secret, unknown to him, of all this silent terror. Francine's curiosity was naturally augmented by this mute scene, the principal actor in which, though absent, was seen by all. The girl was flattered by the Chouan's terrible power, and, although it was hardly consistent with her character to indulge in the tricks of a lady's maid, she was too deeply interested this time in solving the mystery, not to make the most of her advantages.

"Very well, mademoiselle accepts your offer," she said gravely to the host, who started at the words as if suddenly awakened from a sound sleep.

"What offer?" he asked with unfeigned surprise.

"What offer?" echoed Corentin, entering the room.

"What offer?" demanded Mademoiselle de Verneuil.

"What offer?" queried a fourth personage, who was on the lowest step of the staircase and stepped lightly into the room as he spoke.

"Why, to breakfast with some persons of distinction," replied Francine testily.

"Of distinction," rejoined the latest arrival in a biting, ironical voice. "That, my dear man, sounds to me like a wretched ale-house joke; but if this young citizeness is she whom you propose giving us

for table companion, why we should be mad to refuse, my good man," he added, glancing at *Mademoiselle de Verneuil*. "In my mother's absence, I accept." And he laid his hand on the stupefied innkeeper's shoulder.

The graceful nonchalance of youth disguised the insolent haughtiness of these words, which naturally drew the attention of all the actors in this scene to the newcomer. The innkeeper thereupon assumed the attitude of Pilate trying to wash his hands of the death of Jesus Christ; he stepped back to his stout wife and whispered in her ear :

"You are my witness that if anything happens, it won't be my fault. However," he added, in a still lower tone, "go and tell *Monsieur Marche-à-Terre* what's going on."

The traveller, who was a young man of medium height, wore a blue coat, and long black gaiters which reached above his knee over a pair of blue broadcloth trousers. This simple uniform, without epaulets, was that of the pupils of the *École Polytechnique*. At a single glance, *Mademoiselle de Verneuil* detected beneath that sombre costume the distinguished bearing, the indefinable something indicative of noble birth. Although the young man's face seemed ordinary enough at first glance, it soon attracted attention by the conformation of certain features wherein was revealed a mind capable of great things. His bronzed complexion, light, curly hair, sparkling blue eyes, sharp nose, graceful, easy carriage—everything about him indicated a man

whose life was guided by exalted ideas, and who was accustomed to command. But the most characteristic signs of his genius were found in a chin *à la* Bonaparte, and in his lower lip which joined the upper with the graceful curve of the acanthus leaf under the Corinthian capital. Nature had endowed those two features with irresistible charm.

"This young man is singularly distinguished looking for a Republican," said Mademoiselle de Verneuil to herself.

To see all this at a glance, to feel her pulses thrill with the desire to please, to turn her head gently aside, to smile coquettishly, to discharge one of the soft, velvety glances that reanimate a heart dead to love, to veil her great black eyes behind their lids, whose thick lashes made a dark line on her face; to seek her most melodious tones in order to impart an irresistible charm to the trite phrase: "We are greatly obliged to you, monsieur"—all this manœuvring did not consume the time required to describe it. Then Mademoiselle de Verneuil, turning to the host, asked to be shown to her room, discovered the staircase and disappeared with Francine, leaving the stranger to guess whether that reply denoted an acceptance or a refusal of his invitation.

"Who is that woman?" the pupil of the École Polytechnique hastily inquired of the speechless and more and more bewildered host.

"She is Citizeness Verneuil," replied Corentin sharply, eying the young man with a jealous glance, "a *ci-devant*; what business have you with her?"

The stranger, who was humming a Republican ballad, cast a haughty glance at Corentin. For a moment the two young men glared at each other like two roosters about to fight, and in that moment hatred was sown between them forever. Corentin's green eye was as full of malevolence and treachery as the young soldier's blue eye was frank and honest; the manners of the one were innately noble, the other's cringing and servile; one stood erect, the other grovelled; one commanded respect, the other strove to obtain it; one seemed to say: "Let us win the fight!" the other: "Let us divide!"

"Is Citizen du Gua Saint-Cyr here?" said a peasant, entering the room.

"What do you want with him?" asked the young man, going forward to meet him.

The peasant bowed low and handed him a letter, which the young man threw into the fire after reading it. He made no reply save an inclination of the head and the man took his leave.

"You come from Paris, doubtless, citizen?" said Corentin, walking toward the stranger with considerable ease of manner and a submissive, oily air that Citizen du Gua seemed to find insupportable.

"Yes," he replied shortly.

"And you are promoted to some rank in the artillery, I presume?"

"No, citizen, in the navy."

"Ah! you are on your way to Brest?" asked Corentin in an indifferent tone.

But the young sailor turned quickly on his heel without replying, and soon gave the lie to the fair hopes that his face had led Mademoiselle de Verneuil to form. He busied himself about his breakfast with childish zeal, questioned the chef and the hostess about their receipts, expressed his amazement at provincial habits, like a Parisian torn from his enchanted shell, and turned up his nose like a dainty girl ; in short, the strength of character exhibited by his acts was in inverse proportion to that denoted by his face and his manners. Corentin smiled pityingly at the wry face he made when he tasted the best Normandy cider.

“Pah !” he cried, “how can you people drink that stuff ? There’s food and drink too in it. The Republic is quite right to be suspicious of a province where they knock off the grapes with poles, and shoot travellers from ambush on the highroads. Don’t put a carafe of that medicine on my table, but give us honest red and white Bordeaux. Above all things, go and see if there’s a good fire upstairs. These people seem to me to be very backward in the matter of civilization.—Ah !” he continued with a sigh, “there’s but one Paris in the world, and it’s a great pity one can’t take it to sea ! What, old spoil-sauce,” he said to the chef, “are you putting vinegar in that chicken *fricassée* when you have lemons there ?—As for you, mine hostess, you gave me such coarse sheets that I didn’t close my eyes all night.”

Then he began to play with a great cane, exe-

cuting with puerile care, evolutions in which a greater or less degree of grace and adroitness indicated the more or less honorable rank that a young man occupied in the class of dandies.

“Do they expect to restore the navy of the Republic with such fops as that?” said Corentin confidentially to the landlord, scrutinizing his face carefully.

“That man,” said the young sailor in the landlady’s ear, “is some spy of Fouché’s. He has police written on his face, and I would swear that that spot on his chin is Paris mud. But tit for—”

At that moment a lady whom the sailor rushed to meet with all the external signs of deep respect, entered the inn kitchen.

“Come, come, dear mamma,” he said. “In your absence I believe I have enlisted some table companions.”

“Table companions,” said she, “what madness!”

“It’s Mademoiselle de Verneuil,” he replied in an undertone.

“She died on the scaffold after the Savenay affair; she had gone to Le Mans to save her brother, the Prince de Loudon,” said his mother hastily.

“You are in error, madame,” said Corentin softly, emphasizing the word *madame*; “there are two Demoiselles de Verneuil, great families always have several branches.”

The newcomer, surprised at this familiarity, drew back a few steps to examine her unexpected interlocutor; she gazed fixedly at him with her black



eyes overflowing with the keen sagacity so natural to women, and seemed to be trying to conjecture what interest he could have in asserting the continued existence of Mademoiselle de Verneuil. At the same time Corentin, who was stealthily scrutinizing the lady, mentally deprived her of all the pleasures of maternity and accorded her those of love; he gallantly denied that a woman whose dazzling skin, heavy arched eyebrows and long thick lashes aroused his admiration, and whose abundant black hair arranged in two bands over her forehead set off the youthful charm of an intellectual face—that such a woman could be so fortunate as to have a son of twenty. The slight wrinkles on her brow, far from denoting length of years, betrayed the existence of youthful passions; and if her piercing eyes were slightly veiled, it was impossible to say whether that condition was due to the fatigue of travelling, or to too frequent indulgence in pleasure. Lastly, Corentin noticed that the unknown was enveloped in a mantle of English material, and that the shape of her hat—a foreign production doubtless—belonged to none of the so-called Grecian styles which then controlled Parisian toilets.

Corentin was one of those individuals whose natures lead them always to suspect evil rather than good, and he instantly conceived doubts as to the good citizenship of the two travellers. For her part, the lady, who had with equal rapidity examined Corentin's face and manners, turned to her son with a significant expression which might be accurately

translated by these words : " Who is this creature ? Is he on our side ? " To this mental question the young sailor replied by an attitude, a glance and a wave of the hand which said : " Faith, I know nothing about him, and he seems even more suspicious to me than to you." Then, leaving his mother to solve the mystery, he turned to the landlady and whispered :

" Try to find out who that rascal is, and if he is really in attendance on that young lady, and why ? "

" So you are quite sure, citizen, that Mademoiselle de Verneuil is still in existence ? " said Madame du Gua, looking at Corentin.

" She is in existence, *madame*, in flesh and blood, as certainly as Madame du Gua Saint-Cyr."

This reply concealed a profound sarcasm, the secret of which was known only to the lady herself, and any other than she would have been disconcerted by it. Her son suddenly glanced fixedly at Corentin, who coolly drew his watch from his pocket, apparently without suspicion of the confusion his retort had caused. The lady, ill at ease and curious to know at once whether his remark concealed any perfidious purpose, or whether it was simply the result of chance, said to Corentin in the most natural way :

" *Mon Dieu*, how unsafe the roads are ! We were attacked by Chouans beyond Mortagne. My son was very near being killed, he received two bullets through his hat while defending me."

" What, madame, you were in the mail-coach

that the brigands robbed, notwithstanding the escort—the same one that brought us here? You must know the vehicle then! They told me, when I came through Mortagne, that there were two thousand Chouans engaged in the attack on the coach and that everybody was killed, even the passengers. That's the way history is written!"

The drawling tone adopted by Corentin and his imbecile expression made him resemble an habitué of Petite-Provence, who should regretfully be convinced of the falsity of a piece of political news.

"Alas! madame," he continued, "if travellers are murdered so near Paris, judge how dangerous the roads of Bretagne must be! On my word, I propose to return to Paris without going any farther."

"Is Mademoiselle de Verneuil young and lovely?" the lady asked the hostess, as if struck by a sudden thought.

At that moment the host interrupted the conversation, which had an almost painful interest for the three persons concerned, by announcing that breakfast was served. The young sailor offered his hand to his mother with a feigned familiarity that confirmed Corentin's suspicions, and said aloud as they walked toward the stairs:

"Citizen, if you are in attendance on Citizeness Verneuil and she accepts the landlord's suggestion, don't hesitate to—"

Although the words were uttered in a hasty and by no means engaging tone, Corentin went upstairs.

The young man pressed the lady's hand earnestly when they were separated from the Parisian by some seven or eight steps, and said in a low voice :

“See to what inglorious risks your imprudent enterprises expose us ! If we are discovered, how can we escape ? And what a part you are making me play ! ”



All three entered a room of considerable size. One need not have travelled much in the West to realize that the innkeeper had drawn upon his choicest treasures and exerted himself to produce a repast of no ordinary magnificence. The table was laid with great care. The warmth of a huge fire had driven the dampness out of the apartment. Nor were the linen, the dishes and the chairs noticeably dirty. Wherefore Corentin concluded that the landlord had, to use a slang expression, cut himself in four pieces in order to please the strangers.

“So these people aren’t what they seem to be,” he said to himself. “That little fellow’s a fox ; I took him for a fool, but now I believe he’s as shrewd as I am myself.”

The young sailor, his mother and Corentin awaited the coming of Mademoiselle de Verneuil, whom the host went to summon. But the fair traveller did not appear. The pupil of the École Polytechnique suspected that she might make some objections, so he left the room, humming the air *Veillons au salut de l’Empire*, and went to Mademoiselle de Verneuil’s room, impelled by an eager desire

to overcome her scruples and take her with him. Perhaps he wished to solve the doubts that disturbed him, or perhaps to try upon the stranger the power that every man claims he is able to exert over a pretty woman.

"If he's a Republican," said Corentin to himself, as he watched him leave the room, "may I be hanged! He has the swing of a courtier in his shoulders. And if that's his mother," he added, still speaking to himself, and glancing at Madame du Gua, "then I'm the Pope! I have some Chouans at my mercy. I must make sure of their quality."

Soon the door opened and the young sailor appeared, leading Mademoiselle de Verneuil by the hand, and escorting her to the table with courteous self-assurance. The hour that had passed had not been wasted in the devil's service. Assisted by Francine, Mademoiselle de Verneuil had arrayed herself in a travelling costume more to be feared perhaps than the most ravishing *toilette de bal*. Its very simplicity had the charm that proceeds from the art with which a woman lovely enough to do without ornaments can reduce costume to a secondary rank in the scale of attractions. She wore a green dress of stylish cut, whose spencer embellished with frogs marked the outlines of her form with an affectation hardly befitting a young girl, and showed her supple figure, her fine bust and her graceful movements. She entered the room smiling with the natural amiability of women who can display, between rosy lips, two even rows of teeth as

transparent as porcelain, and in their cheeks, two dimples as fresh as a child's. Having laid aside the hood which had at first almost concealed her from the young sailor's gaze, she could easily employ the thousand and one little wiles, so innocent in appearance, by which a woman shows off and attracts admiration to all the points of beauty in her face and to the graceful outlines of her head. A certain harmony between her manners and her costume made her seem so much younger than she was that Madame du Gua believed that she was very liberal in giving her twenty years. The coquetry of her toilet, evidently intended to make a favorable impression, was certain to arouse the young man's hopes ; but Mademoiselle de Verneuil bowed to him with a slight inclination of the head, without looking at him, and seemed to turn her back upon him with a playful heedlessness that disconcerted him. This reserve on her part indicated neither prudence nor coquetry to the eyes of the strangers, but a natural or feigned indifference. The candid expression which the fair traveller was able to impart to her features made them impenetrable. She made no sign that betokened anticipations of triumph, but seemed plentifully endowed with the pretty little ways that seduce young men and that had already made a dupe of the young sailor's self-esteem. So it was that he returned to his place with a sort of vexation.

Mademoiselle took Francine by the hand and said in a sweet voice, addressing Madame du Gua :

“Madame, would you very kindly allow this young woman, who is rather a friend than a servant to me, to dine with us? In these stormy times devotion can be requited only by the heart, and is it not all that we have left?”

Madame du Gua answered the last sentence, which was spoken in an undertone, with a rather ceremonious half-courtesy, which betrayed her annoyance at falling in with so pretty a woman. Then she leaned toward her son and whispered to him :

“Oho ! stormy times, devotion, madame, and the servant ! that must be some creature sent by Fouché, and not Mademoiselle de Verneuil at all.”

The guests were about to take their seats when Mademoiselle de Verneuil noticed Corentin, whose eyes were still fixed in stern scrutiny on the two strangers, both of whom were restless under his gaze.

“Citizen,” said she, “surely you are too well-bred to dog my steps thus. When it sent my parents to the scaffold, the Republic was not generous enough to provide me with a guardian. Although with incredible, chivalrous gallantry you have accompanied me thus far in my own despite,”—here she uttered a sigh—“I have determined not to allow the patronizing attention of which you are so lavish to cause you any inconvenience. I am safe here, you can leave me.”

She bestowed a disdainful stare upon him as she spoke. Her meaning was understood, Corentin re-



pressed a smile that almost curled up the corners of his crafty lips, and bowed respectfully.

"Citizeness," he said, "I shall always consider it an honor to obey you. Beauty is the only queen a true Republican can conscientiously serve."

As he left the room Mademoiselle de Verneuil's eyes gleamed with such innocent joy, the meaning smile upon her lips as she glanced at Francine was so instinct with delight, that Madame du Gua, whose prudence increased with her jealousy, felt inclined to abandon the suspicions that Mademoiselle de Verneuil's flawless beauty had sown in her mind.

"Perhaps it is Mademoiselle de Verneuil," she whispered to her son.

"And what about the escort?" replied the young man, made circumspect by his annoyance. "Is she a prisoner or a protégée, a friend or an enemy of the government?"

Madame du Gua winked as if to say that she would find a way to clear up the mystery. However, Corentin's departure seemed to allay the sailor's distrust, his face lost its severe expression and he looked at Mademoiselle de Verneuil in a way that revealed an immoderate love of women and not the respectful ardor of a newly-born passion. The young woman became all the more circumspect and reserved her affectionate words for Madame du Gua. The young man, raging within himself, also tried in his bitter wrath to play at insensibility. Mademoiselle de Verneuil seemed not to notice this manœuvring and her manner was simple without

timidity, reserved without prudery. Thus this meeting of persons who did not seem likely to become intimate, awoke no particularly keen sympathies. Indeed there was a commonplace embarrassment, a constraint, which destroyed all the pleasure Mademoiselle de Verneuil and the young sailor had promised themselves a moment before. But women have among themselves such admirable tact in enforcing observance of the proprieties, such close bonds of intimacy or such keen craving for emotion, that they always know how to break the ice on these occasions. Suddenly, as if the two fair guests had had the same thought, they began innocently to make sport of their only cavalier, and vied with each other in lavishing jests and attentions upon him. This unanimity left them free ; a look or a word which might have had some importance had it escaped them during their previous constraint, became meaningless now. In short, after half an hour, the two women, who were already foes in secret, seemed the best friends in the world. The young sailor was surprised to find that he was as ill-pleased with Mademoiselle de Verneuil's freedom of speech as with her reserve. He was in such a state of irritation that he regretted with smothered wrath having asked her to share his breakfast.

"Madame," said Mademoiselle de Verneuil to Madame du Gua, "is monsieur your son always as melancholy as at this moment?"

"Mademoiselle," he replied, "I was just asking myself of what use is happiness that is about to

fly away. The secret of my melancholy lies in the keenness of my pleasure."

"That's a madrigal," she said with a laugh, "that savors more of the court than the École Polytechnique."

"He simply put in words a very natural thought, mademoiselle," said Madame du Gua, who had her own reasons for wishing to tame the stranger.

"Come, laugh a little!" rejoined Mademoiselle de Verneuil, smiling at the young man. "What are you like, pray, when you weep, if what you please to call happiness saddens you like this?"

That smile, accompanied by an aggressive glance that destroyed the harmony of her mask of innocence, gave the sailor a little hope. But, impelled by her nature, which always leads a woman to do too much or too little, Mademoiselle de Verneuil at one moment seemed to take possession of the young man by a glance in which shone pregnant promises of love; at another moment she met his gallant expressions with cold, stern modesty; a vulgar manœuvre, behind which women conceal their real emotions. Once, for a single instant, when each of them thought to find the other's eyes lowered, they made known their real thoughts to each other; but they were as prompt to veil their glances as they had been to mingle their light, which sowed confusion in their hearts while enlightening them. Ashamed of having said so many things in a single glance, they no longer dared look at each other. Mademoiselle de Verneuil, anxious to correct the

impression she had conveyed, took refuge in frigid politeness, and even seemed to await the end of the repast with impatience.

"You must have suffered terribly in prison, mademoiselle?" said Madame du Gua.

"Alas! madame, it seems to me as if I were still there."

"Is your escort intended to protect you or watch you, madame? Are you a precious or suspicious object to the Republic?"

Mademoiselle understood instinctively that she inspired little interest in Madame du Gua, and she took fright at the question.

"Madame," she replied, "I don't know precisely what the nature of my relations with the Republic is at this moment."

"You make it tremble for its safety perhaps," observed the young man with a touch of irony.

"Why not respect mademoiselle's secrets?" said Madame du Gua.

"Oh! madame, the secrets of a young woman who as yet knows nothing of life but its woes, are not very interesting."

"But," rejoined Madame du Gua, bent upon continuing a conversation which might give her the information she wanted, "the First Consul's intentions seem to me perfectly unexceptionable. Don't they say that he is going to revoke the laws against *émigrés*?"

"It is true, madame," she replied, too eagerly perhaps; "but, in that case, why do we stir La

Vendée and Bretagne to revolt? Why set France on fire?"

This generous outburst, by which she seemed to reproach herself, made the sailor start. He looked closely at Mademoiselle de Verneuil, but could discover no sign either of love or hate upon her features. That fair skin, whose coloring attested its fineness, was impenetrable. Invincible curiosity suddenly attached him to this strange creature, to whom he was already attracted by passionate desire.

"Are you going to Mayenne, madame?" she said after a short pause.

"Yes, mademoiselle," the young man replied with a questioning expression.

"Very well, madame," continued Mademoiselle de Verneuil, "as your son is in the service of the Republic—"

She uttered the words with an air of apparent unconcern, but she cast upon the two strangers one of the furtive glances that are known only to women and diplomatists.

"You must fear the Chouans, do you not?" she continued; "an escort is not to be despised. We have almost become travelling companions, come to Mayenne with us."

The mother and the son hesitated and seemed to consult each other.

"I don't know, mademoiselle," the young man replied, "if it is very prudent to confide to you that interests of the greatest importance require our presence to-night in the neighborhood of Fougères,

and that we have not as yet found any means of transportation ; but women are so generous by nature that I should be ashamed not to trust you. Nevertheless," he added, " before putting ourselves in your hands, we ought at least to make sure that we can leave them again safe and sound. Are you the queen or the slave of your Republican escort ? Excuse a sailor's outspokenness, but I can see nothing very natural in your situation."

" We live in a time when nothing that happens is natural, monsieur. So you can accept without scruple, do not doubt it. Certainly," she added, dwelling upon the word, " you have no reason to fear treachery in an offer made in straightforward terms by one who does not espouse political hatred."

" The journey under such circumstances will not be without danger," he rejoined, with a gleam in his eye that relieved the commonplaceness of the reply.

" What can you fear, pray ? " she asked with a mocking smile ; " I can imagine no danger for anybody."

" Is this woman who is speaking now the same one whose glance shared my desires ? " said the young man to himself. " What a tone ! She is setting a trap for me."

At that moment the clear, piercing cry of a screech-owl, apparently perched on top of the chimney, rang out like a solemn warning.

" What's that ? " said Mademoiselle de Verneuil.

“Our journey doesn’t begin under happy auspices. But how does it happen that screech-owls are singing in broad daylight?” she asked with a gesture of surprise.

“That may happen sometimes,” said the young man coldly.—“Mademoiselle,” he continued, “we might bring you bad luck. Isn’t that what you were thinking? Then we had better not travel together.”

The words were uttered with a calmness and reserve that surprised Mademoiselle de Verneuil.

“Monsieur,” she retorted with aristocratic impertinence, “I am very far from wishing to constrain you. Let us keep the little freedom the Republic leaves us. If madame were alone I should insist—”

A heavy military step was heard in the hall and Commandant Hulot soon appeared, with crabbed mien.

“Come in, colonel,” said Mademoiselle de Verneuil with a smile, pointing to a chair beside her.—“Let us turn our attention, if we must, to affairs of state. But smile then. What’s the matter? Are there Chouans here?”

The commandant had stopped as if petrified at sight of the young stranger, and was examining him with extraordinary interest.

“Would you like some more hare, mother?—Mademoiselle, you are not eating,” said the young sailor to Francine, pretending to be very much occupied with his guests.

But there was something painfully serious about Hulot's surprise and Mademoiselle de Verneuil's close attention, which it was dangerous to overlook.

"What is it, commandant? do you know me?" the young man asked abruptly.

"Perhaps," replied the Republican. "Indeed, I believe I have seen you at the school."

"I never went to the school," retorted the commandant shortly. "What school do you come from, by the way?"

"The École Polytechnique."

"Ah! yes, that barrack where they try to make soidiers in dormitories," rejoined the commandant, whose aversion for officers graduated from that nursery of learning was insurmountable.

"In what corps do you serve?"

"In the navy."

"Oho!" said Hulot with a malicious laugh. "Do you know many pupils of that school in the navy?—They turn out only artillery and engineer officers," he added gravely.

The young man did not lose countenance.

"I am an exception on account of the name I bear," he replied. "We are all sailors in our family."

"Ah!" said Hulot, "what is your family name, citizen?"

"Du Gua Saint-Cyr."

"Then you weren't murdered at Mortagne?"

"Indeed, he came very near it," said Madame du Gua hastily; "my son received two bullets."



“ And have you papers? ” said Hulot, not heeding the mother.

“ Do you care to read them? ” asked the young sailor impertinently, while his cunning blue eye studied alternately the lowering features of the commandant and those of Mademoiselle de Verneuil.

“ Do you think I’d let a novice like you make a fool of me? Come, give me your papers, or if not, off we go ! ”

“ There, there, my good man, I’m not a greenhorn. Is there any reason why I should answer you? Who are you? ”

“ The commandant of the department, ” replied Hulot.

“ Oho ! my case may become very serious, I should be taken with arms in my hand. ”

And he offered the commandant a glass of Bordeaux.

“ I’m not thirsty, ” said Hulot. “ Come, let me see your papers. ”

At that moment the rattle of muskets and the measured tread of soldiers were heard in the street ; Hulot went to the window and his features took on an expression of satisfaction that made Mademoiselle de Verneuil tremble. That indication of interest warmed the heart of the young man, whose face had become cold and proud. After fumbling in his coat pocket, he produced certain papers from a handsome portfolio and handed them to Hulot, who began to read them slowly, comparing the descrip-

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tion in the passport with the features of the suspected traveller. During this examination the cry of the screech-owl began afresh, but this time it was not difficult to distinguish the accent and the modulations of a human voice. Thereupon the commandant returned the papers to the young man with a mocking expression.

"All this is very fine," he said, "but you must go with me to headquarters. I'm not fond of music myself!"

"Why do you take him to headquarters?" asked Mademoiselle de Verneuil in an altered voice.

"My little girl," retorted the commandant with his habitual grimace, "that doesn't concern you."

Irritated by the old soldier's tone and expression, and even more by being humiliated, in a certain sense, before a man who was attracted by her, Mademoiselle de Verneuil rose and laid aside in an instant the attitude of innocence and modesty she had thus far maintained; her color grew brighter and her eyes gleamed.

"Tell me, has this young man satisfied all the requirements of the law?" she demanded softly but with a sort of tremble in her voice.

"Yes, in appearance," replied Hulot ironically.

"Very good, then I propose that you shall let him go his way *in appearance*," she retorted. "Are you afraid that he will escape you? you will escort him with me as far as Mayenne, he will be in the coach with his mother. No remarks, I wish it so!—Well, what now?"—she added, seeing that Hulot ventured

to repeat his little grimace, "do you still consider him a suspicious person?"

"Why somewhat so, I think."

"What do you propose to do with him, pray?"

"Nothing, unless it be to cool his head with a little lead. He's a light-headed fellow," added the commandant, ironically.

"Are you joking, Colonel?" cried Mademoiselle de Verneuil.

"Come on, comrade!" said the commandant, motioning to the sailor with his head; "come, make haste!"

At Hulot's impertinence, Mademoiselle de Verneuil became calm and smiled.

"Don't move," she said to the young man, with a protecting gesture full of dignity.

"Oh! what a lovely head!" the sailor whispered to his mother, who frowned.

Anger and a thousand other irritated but restrained feelings, thereupon revealed new beauties in the young Parisian's face. Francine, Madame du Gua and her son had all risen. Mademoiselle de Verneuil hastily placed herself between them and the commandant, who was smiling, and quickly unfastened two of the frogs of her spencer. Then, acting upon the impulse of the blind passion with which women are seized when their self-esteem is violently attacked, flattered too, perhaps, or impatient to exert her power, as a child might be to play with the new toy just given him, she handed the commandant an open letter.

"Read this," she said with a sardonic smile.

She turned to the young man, and in the intoxication of triumph, bestowed upon him a glance in which mischief and love were mingled. The clouds vanished from the brows of both ; joy heightened the color in their agitated faces, and a thousand contradictory thoughts surged through their minds. At a single glance Madame du Gua decided that Mademoiselle de Verneuil's generosity must be attributed to love rather than to charity, and she was unquestionably right. The pretty traveller blushed at first and modestly lowered her eyelids, realizing all that her woman's glance had said. Before that threatening accusation, she raised her head proudly and defied all eyes. The commandant, dumb-founded, handed back the letter, counter-signed by ministers, which enjoined upon all those in authority to obey the orders of this mysterious personage ; but he drew his sword from its sheath, broke it across his knee and threw away the pieces.

"Mademoiselle, you probably are well aware what you have to do," he said ; "but a Republican has his own ideas and his own pride. I cannot serve where pretty girls command ; the First Consul will receive my resignation this evening, and others than Hulot will obey you. When I reach a point where I don't understand, I stop ; especially when I am expected to understand."

There was a moment's silence, but it was soon broken by the young Parisian, who marched up to the commandant, offered him her hand and said :

“Colonel, although your beard’s a little long, you may kiss me ; you are a man.”

“And I am proud of it, mademoiselle,” he answered, awkwardly depositing a kiss on the strange creature’s hand.—“As for you, comrade,” he added, shaking his finger threateningly at the young man, “you had a narrow escape !”

“Well, commandant,” said the stranger with a laugh, “it’s time to put an end to the jest, and if you wish I will go with you to headquarters.”

“Will you bring your invisible whistler, Marche-à-Terre along ?”

“Who is Marche-à-Terre ?” asked the sailor, with every indication of the most genuine surprise.

“Didn’t somebody whistle just now ?”

“Even so,” rejoined the stranger, “what connection is there between that whistling and me, I ask you ? I supposed that the soldiers you had ordered to arrest me probably took that method of announcing their arrival.”

“You really thought that ?”

“*Mon Dieu*, yes. But drink your glass of Bordeaux, pray—it’s delicious.”

Amazed at the sailor’s well-feigned astonishment, the incredible heedlessness of his manner and the youthful appearance of his face, which was made almost like a child’s by the carefully curled locks of his fair hair, the commandant wavered amid innumerable suspicions. He noticed Madame du Gua, who was trying to decipher the secret of the glances

her son was darting at Mademoiselle de Verneuil, and asked her abruptly :

“ Your age, citizeness ? ”

“ Alas ! Monsieur l’Officier, the laws of our Republic are becoming very heartless ! I am thirty-eight years old.”

“ If I were to be shot for it, I wouldn’t believe a word of it. Marche-à-Terre is here, he whistled, you are Chouans in disguise. *Tonnerre de Dieu !* I’ll have the inn surrounded and searched.”

At that moment an irregular whistling, much like that they had heard before and evidently proceeding from the inn yard, interrupted the commandant ; he rushed out into the corridor very opportunely for Madame du Gua, for he did not see the pallor that overspread her face at his words. Hulot saw that the whistler was a postilion, who was harnessing his horses to the mail-coach ; he abandoned his suspicions, it seemed so absurd that Chouans should venture into Alençon, and he returned to the room in confusion.”

“ I forgive him now, but later he shall pay dear for the moments he has made us pass here,” said the mother solemnly in her son’s ear, just as Hulot returned.

The gallant officer’s embarrassed expression told of the struggle going on in his heart between the strict performance of his duty and his natural kindliness. He maintained his morose manner, perhaps because he thought he had made a mistake, but he took the glass of Bordeaux and said :

“Your pardon, comrade ; but your school sends such young officers into the artillery—”

“Have they even younger ones among the brigands ?” asked the pretended sailor with a laugh.

“For whom did you take my son, pray ?” said Madame du Gua.

“For the Gars, the commandant sent by the English Cabinet to the Chouans and Vendéans ; his real name is the Marquis de Montauran.”

The commandant continued to keep a close watch upon the faces of the two suspects, who looked at each other with that strange expression which two presumably ignorant persons assume and which may be translated by this dialogue : “Do you know him ?”—“No ; and you ?”—“Never heard of him.”—“What’s he talking about ?”—“He’s dreaming.”—Then follows the sly, insulting laugh of idiocy when it thinks it has triumphed.

The sudden change in Marie de Verneuil’s manner and her apparent torpor when she heard the name of the Royalist general, were perceptible only to Francine, who alone was familiar with all the imperceptible variations of that youthful face. The commandant, altogether worsted, picked up the pieces of his sword, glanced at Mademoiselle de Verneuil, whose outburst of warm feeling had solved the secret of touching his heart, and said to her :

“As for you, mademoiselle, I retract nothing I have said, and to-morrow the fragments of my sword will be in the hands of General Bonaparte, unless—”

“Bah! what do I care for Bonaparte or your Republic or the Chouans or the King or the Gars?” she cried, restraining with but partial success an outbreak of bad temper.

Some strange caprice or concealed passion imparted a glowing color to her face, and it was easy to see that the whole world would be as nothing to her as soon as she should single out some one creature therein; but suddenly she forced herself to become calm once more, finding that she was, like a sublime actor, the centre of observation of all those present. The commandant rose abruptly. Mademoiselle de Verneuil, ill at ease and excited, followed him into the corridor, where she stopped him and asked in a solemn tone:

“Had you any strong reasons for suspecting that young man to be the Gars?”

“*Tonnerre de Dieu!* mademoiselle, the fellow who is in attendance on you came and told me that the passengers and courier had been murdered by the Chouans, which I already knew but he also told me something I did not know, the names of the dead passengers, and their name was Du Gua Saint-Cyr!”

“Oh! if Corentin has had his hand in it, I’m not surprised at anything!” she cried with an expression of disgust.

The commandant walked away, not daring to look at Mademoiselle de Verneuil, whose dangerous beauty was already making a disturbance in his heart.



“If I had stayed two minutes longer, I should have been fool enough to resume my sword in order to escort her,” he said to himself, as he descended the stairs.

When she saw that the young man did not take his eyes from the door through which Mademoiselle de Verneuil had left the room, Madame du Gua whispered in his ear :

“Always the same ! You will surely meet your death through a woman’s instrumentality. A mere doll makes you forget everything. Why did you allow her to breakfast with us, pray ? Who is this Mademoiselle de Verneuil who accepts a stranger’s invitation to breakfast, who has an escort of Blues, and who disarms them with a letter held in reserve in her spencer, like a *billet doux* ? She’s one of those vile creatures by whose aid Fouché is trying to capture you, and the letter she exhibited was given her to authorize her to call on the Blues against you.”

“Ah ! madame,” the young man replied in a harsh tone that pierced her heart and drove the blood from her cheeks, “her generosity gives the lie to your supposition. Remember that only the king’s cause keeps us together. After having had Charette at your feet, does not the world seem to you an empty void ? Do you live for anything except to avenge him ?”

The lady stood lost in thought, like a man who watches from the shore the shipwreck of his treasures and longs the more eagerly for his lost fortune.

Mademoiselle de Verneuil returned, and the young man exchanged with her a smile and a glance instinct with sweet mockery. However uncertain the future might appear, however fleeting their union, the prophetic promises of that ray of hope were only the more alluring. That glance, though swift as light, did not escape the keen eye of Madame du Gua, who understood its meaning. Instantly her brow contracted slightly, and she could not entirely conceal her jealous thoughts. Francine was watching her ; she saw her eyes gleam, her cheeks flush ; she thought she could detect an infernal purpose in her face, behind which some terrible convulsion was in progress ; but lightning is not more swift nor death more sudden than that fleeting expression ; Madame du Gua resumed her affable manner with such perfect self-possession that Francine believed she had been dreaming. Nevertheless, as she detected in her appearance signs of a temper as violent as Mademoiselle de Verneuil's, she shuddered as she thought of the terrific shock that was sure to follow the contact of two such natures, and trembled when she saw Mademoiselle de Verneuil walk up to the young officer with one of those passionate glances that intoxicate, take both his hands, draw him toward her and lead him to the window with a mischievously coquettish gesture.

"Now, confess," she said, trying to read the truth in his eyes, "you are not Citizen du Gua Saint-Cyr, are you ?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

“ But he and his mother were killed on the day before yesterday ! ”

“ I am very sorry for it,” he replied with a laugh. “ However that may be, I am none the less deeply indebted to you and shall always be profoundly grateful ; I should be very glad of an opportunity to prove my gratitude.”

“ I thought I was saving an *émigré*, but I like you better as a Republican.”

As the words escaped from her lips, as if on the impulse of the moment, she became confused ; her very eyes seemed to blush, and her face expressed nothing more than fascinating artlessness of sentiment ; she gently released the officer's hands, not from shame at having pressed them, but because of a thought too heavy for her heart to bear, and left him drunken with hope. Suddenly she seemed to be angry with herself at the liberty she had taken, although it was justified perhaps by the swiftly passing incidents of the journey ; she resumed her conventional attitude, saluted her two fellow-travellers and disappeared with Francine. When they reached their room, Francine folded her fingers together and turned the palms of her hands outward until her arms were twisted, saying as she gazed at her mistress :

“ Ah ! Marie, how many things have happened in a short time ! No one but you ever has such adventures ! ”

Mademoiselle de Verneuil threw her arms about Francine's neck.

“ Ah ! this is life, I am in heaven ! ” she cried.

“ In hell, perhaps,” observed Francine.

“ Oh ! hell if you please ! ” rejoined Mademoiselle de Verneuil gayly. “ Here, give me your hand ; feel how my heart beats ! I am in a burning fever. The whole world is of small consequence to me ! How many times I have seen that man in my dreams ! Oh ! what a beautiful head he has and what a brilliant glance ! ”

“ Will he love you ? ” asked the artless, simple-minded peasant girl in a faltering voice and with a doleful expression on her face.

“ Can you ask ? ” replied Mademoiselle de Verneuil.—“ Tell me, Francine,” she added, adopting a half-serious, half-jocose attitude, “ would it be such a very hard thing to do ? ”

“ But will he always love you ? ” rejoined Francine with a smile.

They looked at each other for a moment equally confused, Francine because she had let fall a hint of her own experience, Marie because for the first time she saw a possibility of a happy future in her passion ; and she remained, as it were, leaning over a precipice whose height she sought to ascertain, awaiting the sound that would indicate that the stone she had heedlessly thrown over had reached the bottom.

“ Ah ! that is for me to look to,” she said, with the gesture of a desperate gambler. “ I have no pity for a woman who is betrayed, she has no one to blame for her lover’s desertion but herself. I

shall find a way to keep beside me, living or dead, the man whose heart has belonged to me.—But,” she added in a surprised tone, after a moment’s silence, “how do you happen to know so much about it, Francine?”

“Mademoiselle,” replied the peasant girl, “I hear steps in the corridor—”

“Ah,” said she, pausing to listen, “it is not *he*! But,” she added, “that’s not an answer to my question! I understand you: I will wait for you to tell me your secret or I will guess it for myself.”

Francine was right. Three taps at the door interrupted their conversation. Captain Merle appeared in the doorway in response to Mademoiselle de Verneuil’s invitation to enter.

As he saluted Mademoiselle de Verneuil in military style, the captain ventured to glance at her and he was so dazzled by her beauty that he could think of nothing else to say than:

“I am at your service, mademoiselle!”

“So you have become my protector by the resignation of the commanding officer of your demi-brigade? That’s what your regiment is called, is it not?”

“Adjutant-major Gérard is my superior officer, and it was he who sent me.”

“Is your commandant afraid of me?” she asked.

“Pardon me, mademoiselle, Hulot doesn’t know what fear is; but when it comes to ladies, you see, he doesn’t feel at home; and it vexed him to find his general in a mob-cap with strings to it.”

“And yet,” rejoined Mademoiselle de Verneuil, “it was his duty to obey his superiors! I like subordination, I warn you, and I don’t propose that any one shall resist my authority.”

“That would be difficult,” replied Merle.

“Let us hold a council,” said she. “You have fresh troops here, they will escort me to Mayenne, where I should arrive this evening. Shall we find other fresh troops there so that we can go on without delay? The Chouans know nothing of our little expedition. If we travel at night, as I suggest, it would go hard with us if we should meet them in sufficient numbers to attack us. Do you think that is possible?”

“Yes, mademoiselle.”

“How is the road from Mayenne to Fougères?”

“Rough. It is all up and down hill, a regular squirrel country.”

“Let us start, let us start!” she said; “and as we have nothing to fear while leaving Alençon, do you go on ahead; we can easily overtake you.”

“One would think she had held her commission ten years,” said Merle to himself, as he took his leave. “Hulot’s mistaken, that girl isn’t one of the kind that pick up an income with a feather bed. And, ten thousand cartridges! if Captain Merle wants to be adjutant-major, I advise him not to take Saint Michael for the devil.”

During Mademoiselle de Verneuil’s conference with the captain, Francine had gone out intending to

examine from a window in the corridor a certain point in the inn-yard, toward which she had been irresistibly drawn by curiosity ever since her arrival at the inn. She gazed at the straw in the stable with such rapt attention that one might have thought she was engaged in prayer before a statue of the Blessed Virgin. Soon she saw Madame du Gua picking her way toward Marche-à-Terre with the cautious step of a cat trying not to wet his paws. When he saw her approaching, the Chouan rose and maintained an attitude of the most profound respect before her. That strange circumstance heightened Francine's curiosity, and she rushed down into the yard, glided along the walls, keeping out of Madame du Gua's sight, and tried to hide behind the stable door ; she walked on tiptoe, held her breath, avoided making the slightest sound, and succeeded in taking up a position near Marche-à-Terre without having attracted his attention.

“ And if, according to all you can find out, that isn't her name,” the stranger was saying to the Chouan, “ you will fire on her without pity, as if she were a mad dog ! ”

“ Very good,” replied Marche-à-Terre.

The lady returned to the inn. The Chouan replaced his red woollen cap on his head, and was still standing where she left him, scratching his ear after the manner of embarrassed folk, when Francine appeared before him as if by magic.

“ Sainte Anne d'Auray ! ” he cried.

Suddenly he dropped his whip, clasped his hands

and stood as if in a trance. A faint flush lighted up his coarse features and his eyes shone like diamonds lost in the mud.

“Is it really Cottin’s *garce*?” he said in so low a tone that he alone could hear it.—“Ain’t you *godaine*, though!” he added after a pause.

That curious word *godain*, *godaine*, is a superlative expression in the patois of those regions, used by lovers to express the perfect accord of a rich costume and a beautiful face.

“I shouldn’t dare to touch you,” added Marche-à-Terre, putting out his broad hand toward Francine none the less, as if to satisfy himself as to the weight of a heavy gold chain that encircled her neck and hung down to her waist.

“And you would do well not to, Pierre!” replied Francine, guided by the instinct that makes a woman a despot when she is not herself the victim of despotism.

She drew back haughtily after enjoying the Chouan’s amazement; but she made up for the harshness of her speech by a glance overflowing with sweetness, and drew near to him again.

“Pierre,” she continued, “that woman was talking to you about the young lady whose service I am in, wasn’t she?”

Marche-à-Terre made no reply and his face betrayed a struggle like that of the dawn between darkness and light. He looked at Francine, then at the great whip he had dropped, then at the gold chain which seemed to possess as great a fascination



for him as the Breton girl's face ; then, as if to put an end to his uneasiness, he picked up his whip, but still he said nothing.

“ Oh ! it's easy enough to guess that that woman ordered you to kill my mistress,” continued Francine, who well knew the secret loyalty of the Gars, and wished to do away with his scruples.

Marche-à-Terre hung his head in a significant way. To Cottin's *garce*, that was equivalent to a reply.

“ Very well, Pierre, if the slightest harm happens to her, if a single hair of her head is injured, we have seen each other for the last time, here and hereafter—for I shall be in paradise, and you will go to hell ! ”

No poor soul possessed of one of those evil spirits which the Church used to exorcise with great pomp, was ever more agitated than was Marche-à-Terre by that prophecy, pronounced with a conviction that gave it a sort of certainty of fulfilment. His glances, at first lighted up with uncouth tenderness, then perplexed by the struggle with the duties enjoined by a fanaticism as exacting as that of love, suddenly became fierce when he observed the imperious manner of the innocent mistress he had formerly taken unto himself. Francine interpreted the Chouan's silence in her own way.

“ So you will do nothing for me ? ” she said in a reproachful tone.

At that the Chouan bestowed upon his mistress a glance as black as a crow's wing.

"Are you free?" he asked, with a growl that Francine alone could hear.

"Should I be here?" she retorted indignantly. "But what are you doing here? You are still at your *Chouannerie*, you are scouring the roads like a mad beast trying to find somebody to bite. Oh! Pierre, if you were wise, you would come with me. This lovely young lady who, I can safely tell you, was once taken in and sheltered by us, has taken good care of me. I have now two hundred francs a year wages. And what's more, Mademoiselle has bought Uncle Thomas's big house for me for fifteen hundred francs, and I have two thousand francs laid by."

But her smile and the enumeration of her treasures failed to make any impression on Marche-à-Terre's impenetrable features.

"The priests said to go to war," he replied. "Every Blue we bring down is worth an indulgence."

"But perhaps the Blues may kill you!"

He replied by letting his arms fall by his sides as if to express his regret for the insignificance of his offering to God and the king.

"And then what would become of me?" exclaimed the young woman sorrowfully.

Marche-à-Terre gazed stupidly at Francine: his eyes seemed to increase in size, and two tears escaped from them and rolled in parallel lines down his hairy cheeks to the goatskin jacket he wore, and a dull groan issued from his breast.

“Sainte Anne d’Auray!—Pierre, is this all you have to say to me after a separation of seven years?—How you have changed!”

“I love you still,” replied the Chouan shortly.

“No,” she whispered in his ear, “the king comes before me.”

“If you look at me like that,” said he, “I’ll go away.”

“Very good, adieu,” she replied sadly.

“Adieu!” echoed Marche-à-Terre.

He seized Francine’s hand, squeezed it, kissed it, crossed himself and fled into the stable like a dog that has stolen a bone.

“Pille-Miche,” he said to his comrade, “I can’t see a thing. Have you got your snuff-box?”

“Oh! *cre’ bleu!* what a fine chain!—” replied Pille-Miche, fumbling in the pocket of his goatskin.

He handed Marche-à-Terre one of the little cone-shaped boxes made of cow-horn, in which the Bretons carry the fine snuff that they grind themselves during the long winter evenings. The Chouan raised his thumb in such a way as to make a hollow in his left hand, as pensioners do to measure their pinches of snuff, and violently shook the box, the top having been unscrewed by Pille-Miche. An impalpable dust fell lightly through the little hole in the apex of the cone of that Breton utensil. Marche-à-Terre repeated the silent operation seven or eight times, as if the powder possessed the power of changing the current of his thoughts. Suddenly he threw the box back to Pille-Miche with a desperate

gesture and picked up a carbine that was hidden in the straw.

“Seven or eight *chinchées* in succession like that don’t suit me at all!” said the penurious Pille-Miche.

“Forward!” cried Marche-à-Terre in a hoarse voice. “We have work to do.”

Some thirty or more Chouans who were lying asleep under the hay racks or in the straw, raised their heads, saw Marche-à-Terre standing up, and disappeared at once through a door opening into the kitchen garden, through which they could reach the fields.



When Francine left the stable, she found the mail-coach ready to start. Mademoiselle de Verneuil and her two travelling companions had already taken their places. The Breton girl shuddered when she saw her mistress on the back seat of the carriage beside the woman who had just given orders for her death. The *suspect* sat on the front seat opposite Marie, and, as soon as Francine had taken her place, the heavy vehicle started off at a fast trot.

The sun had scattered the gray autumnal clouds and its rays enlivened the melancholy aspect of the fields by imparting to them a festive, youthful air. Many lovers take these caprices of the weather for omens. Francine was greatly surprised at the silence that prevailed among the travellers at the outset. Mademoiselle de Verneuil had resumed her chilling air and sat with downcast eyes, her head bent slightly forward and her hands hidden beneath a sort of mantle in which she was enveloped. If she raised her eyes it was only to glance at the different aspects of the landscape as they flew swiftly by. Sure of being admired, she refused to accept admiration; but her apparent heedlessness betrayed more coquetry than innocence. The touching purity which imparts

such harmony to the varying expressions by which feeble hearts reveal their secrets, could hardly lend its charm to a creature whose fervid impulses destined her to struggle amid the tempests of love. Content with the pleasure caused by the hopeful beginning of an intrigue, the stranger did not as yet try to explain to himself the lack of harmony between the strange young woman's coquetry and her exaltation of spirit. Did not her feigned modesty permit him to contemplate at his leisure a face to which tranquillity was as becoming as her previous excitement had been? We are not likely to find fault with the source of our enjoyment.

It is difficult for a pretty woman to avoid the glances of her companions in a close carriage, when their eyes remain fixed upon her, as if seeking an additional relief from the monotony of the journey. And so, overjoyed to be able to satisfy the greed of his budding passion, when the unknown could neither avoid his glance nor take offence at his persistence, the young officer amused himself by studying the pure and graceful outlines of her face. It was like a picture to him. Sometimes the light brought out the transparent pink of the nostrils and the double arch that joined the nose to the upper lip; again, a pallid sunbeam gave effect to the fine shading of the complexion, pearl white under the eyes and about the mouth, pink on the cheeks, dull white about the temples and the neck. He admired the contrast of light and darkness produced by her hair, which framed her face in jet-black rolls, imparting an

ephemeral charm thereto ; for everything is so fleeting in woman ! Her beauty of to-day is often different from her beauty of yesterday, luckily for her it may be ! Being still at an age when man can enjoy those trifles which are the whole of love, the self-styled sailor awaited with pleasure the frequent movement of the eyelids and the seductive rise and fall of the bosom in breathing. Sometimes, following the guidance of his thoughts, he tried to detect some connection between the expression of the eyes and the imperceptible movement of the lips. Every gesture revealed to him some new aspect of her mind, every movement some new phase of her character. If her mobile features were disturbed by some passing thought, if a sudden blush tinged her cheeks, if a rare smile brought new life to her face, he derived untold delight from seeking to guess the mysterious creature's secrets. It was all a snare for the heart, a snare for the senses. And silence, far from raising obstacles to the perfect understanding of their hearts, became a common bond for their thoughts. Several glances in which her eyes met the stranger's, convinced Marie de Verneuil that the prolonged silence would endanger her security ; she thereupon asked Madame du Gua one of the meaningless questions with which conversations are often begun, but she could not refrain from bringing in her son.

“ How could you ever make up your mind, madame, to let your son enter the navy ? ” she said. “ Do you not thereby condemn yourself to never-ending anxiety ? ”

“Mademoiselle, it is the fate of women, of mothers I mean, always to tremble for their most precious treasures.”

“Monsieur is much like you.”

“You think so, mademoiselle?”

This innocent *légitimation* of the age to which Madame du Gua laid claim made the young man smile and added to his mother’s indignation. Her hatred increased with every passionate glance her son bestowed upon Marie. Silence, speech, everything added fresh fuel to the frantic rage which she concealed beneath a most amiable manner.

“Mademoiselle,” said the young man, “you are in error. Sailors are no more exposed to danger than soldiers. Women ought not to hate the navy; have we not the immense advantage over land troops of remaining faithful to our mistresses?”

“Oh! because you can’t help yourselves,” retorted Mademoiselle de Verneuil with a laugh.

“It is fidelity, all the same,” rejoined Madame du Gua in an almost threatening tone.

The conversation became animated, turning upon subjects that were of interest to none but the three travellers; for, under such circumstances, bright people impart new significance to commonplace remarks: but the conversation, frivolous as it was, in which these strangers amused themselves by questioning each other, concealed the desires, the passions and the hopes by which their hearts were stirred. The shrewdness and cunning of Marie, who was always on her guard, convinced Madame



du Gua that only by slander and treachery could she hope to triumph over a rival as redoubtable for her wit as for her beauty. The travellers overtook the escort and therefore the carriage moved less rapidly. The young sailor noticed that they had a long hill to climb and suggested to Mademoiselle de Verneuil that they should walk a short distance. The young man's respectful manner and engaging courtesy seemed to persuade the Parisian, and her ready consent flattered the young man.

"Does madame think as we do?" she said to Madame du Gua. "Will not she walk a little way also?"

"Coquette!" exclaimed that lady as she alighted from the coach.

Marie and the unknown walked side by side and yet apart. The sailor, already in the grasp of passionate desire, was eager to tear away the veil of reserve with which he was confronted and by which he was not deceived. He thought that he might attain his purpose by joking with his companion under favor of that French amiability, that sometimes light and airy, sometimes serious, but always chivalrous and often mocking wit that distinguished the noteworthy men of the exiled aristocracy. But the laughing Parisian joked the young Republican so unmercifully, reproved him for his frivolous intentions so scornfully, dwelling particularly upon the weighty thoughts and the exaltation of mind that found their way into his speech against his will, that he readily guessed the secret of the way to please

her. Thereupon the conversation assumed a new tone. The stranger immediately gratified the hopes that his expressive face aroused. From moment to moment he found fresh difficulties to overcome in his attempt to understand the siren of whom he was becoming more and more deeply enamored, and he was compelled to suspend his judgments concerning a young woman who amused herself by falsifying them all. After he had been fascinated by the contemplation of her beauty, he was drawn toward her unexplored heart by an intense curiosity which Marie took pleasure in arousing. Their conversation insensibly assumed an intimate tone far removed from the tone of indifference that Mademoiselle de Verneuil strove to no purpose to give it.

Although Madame du Gua had followed the lovers, they instinctively walked faster than she and were soon a hundred yards or more in advance of her. Those two charming creatures trudged through the fine sand of the road, carried away by a childish delight in making their light footfalls resound in unison, happy to be enveloped in the same ray of light, which seemed to belong rather to the sun of the springtime, and to inhale together the perfumes of autumn, laden with such rich spoil of vegetation that they seemed like nourishment brought by the air to feed the melancholy of newborn love. Although they both seemed to look upon their momentary meeting as an ordinary adventure, the sky, the locality and the season imparted to their feelings a tinge of gravity that gave them the appearance of

passion. They began by extolling the beauty of the day ; then they spoke of their strange meeting, of the speedy interruption of so pleasant an acquaintance, and of one's readiness to open one's heart in travelling to persons whom one meets only to lose sight of at once. At this last remark, the young man took advantage of what seemed to be a sort of tacit permission to indulge in some more confidential conversation, and tried to venture upon an avowal of his passion, like a man accustomed to such situations.

"Have you noticed, mademoiselle," he said, "how seldom the sentiments follow travelled paths in these days of terror that we are living in? Doesn't everything about us seem to happen with inexplicable suddenness? To-day we love or hate on the strength of a glance. People join hands for life or part with the same celerity with which they go to their death. Everyone makes haste with everything, as the nation does with its insurrections. In the midst of danger, attachments are certain to go deeper than when life moves on in the ordinary way. In Paris, of late, everyone learned, as men learn on a battlefield, all that can be said by a grasp of the hand."

"People felt the necessity of living quickly and well," she replied, "because they had but little time to live."

With a glance at her companion that seemed to call his attention to the end of their short journey together, she added slyly :

“ You know a great deal of life for a young man just out of the École Polytechnique ! ”

“ What do you think of me ? ” he asked after a moment’s silence. “ Tell me your opinion without pity. ”

“ Of course you want to acquire the right to talk to me about myself ? ” she laughingly retorted.

“ You don’t answer me, ” he went on, after a brief pause. “ Beware, silence is often a reply. ”

“ Don’t I know all that you would like to be able to say to me ? *Mon Dieu !* you have already said too much. ”

“ Oh ! if we understand each other, ” he retorted with a laugh, “ I have obtained more than I dared hope. ”

She smiled so graciously that she seemed to accept the courteous challenge with which every man likes to threaten a woman. Thereupon they persuaded each other, seriously as well as by jocose remarks, that it was impossible for them ever to be anything more to each other than they were at that moment. The young man might abandon himself to a passion that had no future and Marie could laugh at it. Then, when they had raised an imaginary barrier between them, they seemed equally eager to make the most of the dangerous liberty for which they had stipulated. Suddenly Marie struck her foot against a stone and stumbled.

“ Take my arm, ” said the stranger.

“ I must do it, silly boy ! You would be too

proud if I refused. Wouldn't it seem as if I were afraid of you ? ”

“ Ah ! mademoiselle,” he replied, pressing her arm against his side so that she could feel his heart beat, “ you will make me very proud of this favor.”

“ Very well, my ready compliance will destroy your illusions.”

“ Are you seeking already to defend me against the danger of the emotions you inspire ? ”

“ Cease, I beg you,” said she, “ to entangle me in these petty boudoir ideas, these alcove enigmas. I don't like to find in a man of your character, wit of the sort that any fool may have. Come !—we are in the open country beneath a beautiful, clear sky ; above and around us everything is grand. You want to tell me that I am lovely, don't you ? but your eyes prove it, and what's more, I know it ; but I am not a woman to be flattered by compliments. Would you like, perchance, to talk to me about your *sentiments* ? ” she added with sardonic emphasis. “ Can you imagine that I am such a simpleton as to believe in sudden sentiments strong enough to dominate one's whole life by the memory of a single morning ? ”

“ Not of a single morning,” he replied, “ but of a lovely woman who showed a generous heart.”

“ You forget,” she rejoined with a laugh, “ some much greater attractions, an unknown woman, everything about whom must seem strange, her name, her rank, her situation, her freedom of speech and manners.”

“You are not unknown to me,” he cried; “I have divined your character and I would add nothing to your perfections, unless it be a little more faith in the love you inspire at first sight.”

“Ah! my poor child of seventeen, are you talking of love already?” she said with a smile. “Very well, so be it. It’s a fair subject of conversation between two people, like the rain and the sunshine, when we make a call—let us take it! You will find neither false modesty nor pettiness in me. I can listen to the word without blushing; it has been said to me so many times without the tone that comes from the heart, that it has become almost meaningless to me. It has been repeated to me at the theatre, in books, in society, everywhere; but I have never fallen in with anything resembling that magnificent sentiment.”

“Have you sought it?”

“Yes.”

The word was uttered with such perfect self-possession that the young man made a gesture of surprise and gazed earnestly at Marie as if he had suddenly changed his opinion as to her character and her real situation.

“Mademoiselle,” he said with ill-disguised emotion, “are you girl or woman, angel or demon?”

“I am both,” she laughingly replied. “Isn’t there always something diabolic and angelic about a young woman who has never loved, who does not love, and who perhaps never will love?”

“And you are happy so?”—he asked, assuming a freer tone and manner, as if he had already begun to feel less esteem for his rescuer.

“Oh! happy,” she rejoined, “no. When I think I am alone, controlled by social conventions that make me necessarily artificial, then I envy a man’s privileges. But, when I think of all the means nature has given us to encompass you men, to entangle you in the invisible nets of a power none of you can resist, then my rôle here below smiles upon me; and again, suddenly it seems mean and petty to me, and I feel that I should despise a man if he were the dupe of vulgar fascinations. In short, at one moment I am conscious of a yoke, and it pleases me, then it seems horrible to me and I refuse to submit to it; again, I feel within myself that longing for self-sacrifice which makes woman so nobly beautiful, then I feel a thirst for domination that consumes me. Perhaps it is the natural struggle between the principles of good and evil that gives life to all earthly creatures. Angel and demon, you have said it. Ah! not to-day am I conscious for the first time of my two-fold nature. However, we women understand our own insufficiency better than you. Have we not an instinct that makes us foresee in everything a degree of perfection that is doubtless beyond the possibility of attainment? But,” she added, glancing at the sky and sighing, “the thing that makes us greater in your eyes—”

“Is?” he asked.

“Why, the fact that we all have to struggle, more or less, against an incomplete destiny.”

“Mademoiselle, why do we part this evening?”

“Ah!” she said, smiling at the passionate glance the young man darted at her, “let us return to the carriage, the fresh air isn’t good for us.”

Marie turned abruptly, the stranger followed her and seized her arm in a grasp that could hardly be called respectful, but that expressed admiration as well as imperious passion. She walked faster; the sailor guessed that she wished to avoid a perhaps inopportune declaration, and he became all the more ardent, risked everything to extort a first sign of favor from the young woman and said, looking at her with a cunning expression:

“Would you like me to tell you a secret?”

“Oh! tell me quickly, if it concerns you.”

“I am not in the service of the Republic. Where are you going? I will go with you.”

When he had spoken, Marie trembled violently; she withdrew her arm from his grasp and covered her face with her hands to conceal the flush, or the pallor, that overspread her features; but suddenly she removed her hands and said in a faltering voice:

“You have begun then as you will end, you have deceived me?”

“Yes,” he replied.

At that reply she turned her back to the lumbering mail-coach toward which they were walking, and began almost to run.



"Why," said the unknown, "I thought the fresh air did you no good?"

"Oh! the wind has changed," she said in a grave voice, walking on in the same direction, her mind torn by tempestuous thoughts.

"You are silent?" queried the stranger, whose heart was filled with that sweet apprehension caused by the anticipation of pleasure.

"Oho!" said she shortly, "the tragedy has begun very promptly."

"What tragedy do you mean?" he asked.

She stopped, eyed her companion from head to foot with an expression of mingled fear and curiosity; then she concealed beneath an impenetrably calm exterior the emotions that agitated her, and showed that she had had much experience of life for so young a woman.

"Who are you?" she continued; "but I know! When I first saw you, I suspected it: you are the Royalist leader, the Gars, are you not? The ex-Bishop of Autun was right when he told us that we should always believe in presentiments of evil."

"What interest have you in knowing that fellow?"

"What interest can he have in concealing his identity from me if I have already saved his life?"

She began to laugh, but her laughter was forced.

"I acted very wisely in preventing you from telling me that you love me. Understand, monsieur, I abhor you. I am a Republican, you are a Royalist, and I would betray you if you had not my

word, if I had not already saved you once, and if—”

She stopped. These violent revulsions of feeling, these internal conflicts which she no longer took the trouble to disguise disturbed the stranger, who tried, but in vain, to watch her face.

“Let us part at once, I wish it,” she said.

She turned quickly, walked away a few steps and returned.

“But no, I have a very great interest in knowing who you are,” she said. “Keep nothing from me and tell me the truth. Who are you? for you are no more a pupil of the *École Polytechnique* than you are seventeen years old.”

“I am a sailor, ready to leave the Ocean to follow you wherever your imagination may choose to guide me. If I am so fortunate as to seem mysterious to you, I shall take good care not to put an end to your curiosity. Why mingle the serious interests of real life with the life of the heart, in which we were beginning to understand each other so well?”

“Our hearts might have come to an understanding,” she said gravely. “But, monsieur, I have no right to demand your confidence. You will never know the full extent of your obligations to me; I shall say nothing.”

They walked on a few steps in absolute silence.

“What interest has my life for you?” the stranger began.

“Monsieur, for mercy’s sake, tell me your name,” said she, “or else keep silent. You are a child,”

## ON THE ROAD TO MAYENNE

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*"Why," said he, taking the hand which she absent-mindedly allowed him to hold, "why has my indiscretion, in suggesting that this day might have a sequel, destroyed its charm?"*

*Mademoiselle de Verneuil, who seemed to be suffering, made no reply.*



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she added, shrugging her shoulders, "and I am sorry for you."

His fellow-traveller's obstinacy in her attempts to learn his secret made the pretended sailor hesitate between prudence and his desires. The anger of the woman one covets has some very powerful attractions; her submission, like her wrath, is so imperious, she attacks so many chords in the man's heart, she penetrates it and subjects it to her yoke! Was it simply an additional touch of coquetry in Mademoiselle de Verneuil? Despite his passion the stranger had the strength to distrust a woman who strove to extort from him by violence a secret involving life and death.

"Why," said he, taking the hand which she absent-mindedly allowed him to hold, "why has my indiscretion, in suggesting that this day might have a sequel, destroyed its charm?"

Mademoiselle de Verneuil, who seemed to be suffering, made no reply.

"In what way can I have grieved you," he continued, "and what can I do to make you happier?"

"Tell me your name."

It was his turn now to keep silent, and so they walked on a few steps. Suddenly Mademoiselle de Verneuil stopped, like a person who has reached an important determination.

"Monsieur le Marquis de Montauran," said she with dignity, although she could not entirely disguise her agitation, which made her twitch nervously, "whatever it may cost me, I am happy to render

you a service. Here we must part. The escort and the mail-coach are too necessary to your safety for you not to accept both. Have no fear of the Republicans; all those soldiers are men of honor, you know, and I shall give orders to the adjutant, which he will execute faithfully. I can return to Alençon on foot with my maid; some of the soldiers will escort us. Listen to what I say, for your head is at stake. If, before you are in a place of safety, you meet the horrible fop you saw at the inn, fly, for he would denounce you instantly. As for myself—”

She paused for a moment.

“As for myself, I return with pride to the paltry miseries of life,” she added in a low tone, struggling to restrain her tears, “Adieu, monsieur. May you be happy! Adieu—”

She motioned to Captain Merle, who had just reached the top of the hill. The young stranger did not expect such a swift conclusion.

“Wait!” he cried in well-feigned desperation.

This strange caprice on the part of a girl for whom he would at that moment have laid down his life, surprised him so that he invented a deplorable ruse to serve the double purpose of concealing his own identity and sacrificing Mademoiselle de Verneuil’s curiosity.

“You have almost guessed the truth,” he said; “I am an *émigré*, condemned to death, and my name is Vicomte de Bauvan. Love of my country has brought me back to France, with my brother. I



hope to be struck off the list through the influence of Madame de Beauharnais, who is now the wife of the First Consul ; but, if I fail, then I wish to die on my native soil, fighting beside my friend Montauran. I am going first of all, in secret, with the assistance of a passport he helped me to obtain, to Bretagne, to see if I still own a little property there."

While the young nobleman was speaking, Mademoiselle de Verneuil watched him with a piercing eye. She tried to doubt the truth of his words ; but, being naturally credulous and trustful, her face slowly resumed a serene expression, and she cried :

" Monsieur, is what you tell me true? "

" Absolutely true," replied the unknown, who seemed to be anything but straightforward in his relations with the other sex.

Mademoiselle de Verneuil drew a long breath like a person returning to life.

" Ah ! " she cried, " I am very happy ! "

" Why, do you hate poor Montauran very bitterly? "

" No," she said, " you couldn't understand. I would not have liked *you* to be threatened with the dangers against which I shall try to defend him, as he is your friend."

" Who told you that Montauran was in danger? "

" Eh ! monsieur, even if I had not just come from Paris, where nothing is talked about but his enterprise, the commandant at Alençon told us enough about him, I should say."

“I will ask you then how you can protect him from all danger ?”

“And suppose I do not choose to reply !” said she with the disdainful air with which women are so clever in concealing their emotions. “By what right do you seek to know my secrets ?”

“By the right of a man who loves you.”

“Already ?” she retorted. “No, you do not love me, monsieur ; you see in me an opportunity for a little passing flirtation, that is all. Did I not see through your disguise at once ? Can a person who is somewhat accustomed to good society, be deceived in the present state of manners, when she hears a pupil of the *École Polytechnique* use the choicest language, and disguise the manners of a grandee beneath the outer husk of a Republican so poorly as you have done it ? why your hair still shows the traces of powder and you have an odor of noble birth which a woman of the world is sure to detect at once. And so, in fear and trembling for you lest my spy, who has all a woman’s cunning, should recognize you, I speedily dismissed him. Monsieur, a genuine Republican officer from the *École* would not look upon me as a mere light-o’-love, nor take me for a pretty schemer. Permit me, Monsieur de Bauvan, to submit to you on that subject a feeble woman’s argument. Are you so young that you do not know that of all the individuals of our sex, the most difficult to subdue is she whose value is all computed and who is tired of pleasure ? That sort of woman demands, so I am told, extraordinary se-

ductions, she yields only to her whims; and for a man to undertake to please her is the greatest folly. Let us put aside that class of women, in which you are gallant enough to place me, for they are all supposed to be beautiful,—you should understand that a young, noble, lovely, bright young woman—you grant me those qualities—does not sell herself and can be obtained in but one way, when she is loved. You understand me! If she loves, and if she wishes to do a foolish thing, that foolish thing should be justified by some display of grandeur! Forgive me this exuberance of logic, so rare in our sex; but for your honor and—my own,” she said, bending her head, “I did not wish that we should go astray as to our respective merits, or that you should think *Mademoiselle de Verneuil*, angel or demon, girl or woman, capable of allowing herself to be taken in by commonplace love-making.”

“*Mademoiselle*,” said the pretended viscount, whose surprise, although well concealed, was extreme, and who was suddenly transformed into a man of the world, “I beg you to believe that I will accept you as a very noble personage, full of heart and of lofty sentiments, or—as an honest girl, as you choose!”

“I don’t ask so much of you, *monsieur*,” she replied with a laugh. “Let me keep my incognito. Moreover, my mask is attached more firmly than yours, and it is my pleasure to continue to wear it, if for no other purpose than to find out if the people who talk to me of love are sincere. So don’t ven-

ture to come near me without due reflection. Listen, monsieur," she added, seizing his arm in a strong grasp, "if you could prove to me that you really love me, no human power should separate us. Yes, I would like to share some noble existence with a man, to espouse a vast ambition and exalted ideas. Noble hearts are not unfaithful, for constancy is suited to them ; so that I should be always loved, always happy ; but should I not also be always ready to make of my body a stepping-stone for the man who had my love, to sacrifice myself for him, to endure everything at his hands, to love him still, even if he should cease to love me ? I have never dared confide to any other heart the cravings of my own, nor the passionate outbursts of the exaltation of mind that consumes me ; but I may tell you something of them, since we are to part as soon as you are in safety."

"Part ?—never !" he exclaimed, electrified by the tones that issued from that strong heart, which seemed to be struggling against some overpowering thought.

"Are you free ?" she rejoined, with a disdainful glance that cowed him.

"Oh ! as to that—yes, except for the sentence to death."

Thereupon she said in a voice trembling with bitter emotion :

"If all this were not a dream, what a beautiful life ours would be ! But, although I have said some foolish things, let us not do any. When I think

of all that you must be to appreciate me at my true worth, I doubt everything."

"And I would doubt nothing if you would consent to be—"

"Hush!" she cried, distinguishing the accent of veritable passion in the words; "the fresh air is decidedly not good for us, let us join our chaperons."

The mail-coach soon overtook them, and they resumed their places and rode some leagues in the most profound silence. If they had both found ample food for reflection, their eyes were no longer afraid to meet. Each seemed equally interested in watching the other and guarding his or her own momentous secret; but they felt drawn toward each other by the same desire, which, since their interview, narrowed the extent of their passion, for they had mutually discovered in each other, qualities which enhanced in their eyes the pleasures they anticipated from their struggle or their union. Each of them, it may be, having embarked upon an adventurous life, had arrived at that strange mental condition, wherein, whether from weariness or to defy fate, one avoids serious reflections and abandons one's self to the whims of chance in carrying out an enterprise, precisely because there is no way out of it and one is determined to see its inevitable conclusion. Has not the moral as well as the physical nature its chasms and abysses into which strong characters love to plunge at the risk of their lives, as a gambler loves to stake his fortune? The young nobleman and Mademoiselle de Verneuil had, in a

certain sense, a revelation of these ideas, which were in the minds of both after the interview of which they were the consequence, and thus they made suddenly an immense step forward, for sympathy of hearts follows sympathy of the senses. Nevertheless, the more strongly they felt drawn toward each other, the more interested they were to study each other, were it only to increase, by an involuntary calculation, the sum total of their future enjoyment.

The young man, still lost in wonder at the profundity of this extraordinary girl's ideas, asked himself first of all how such an extensive knowledge of life could be combined with such youthful freshness. Thereupon he thought that he detected an earnest desire to appear chaste in the air of extreme prudery Marie attempted to impart to her attitudes ; he suspected her of pretending, reviled himself for taking pleasure in her company and persuaded himself that she was nothing more than a clever actress. He was right. Mademoiselle de Verneuil, like all young women, becoming more modest as her passion increased in fervor, most naturally adopted the prudish exterior with which women are so expert in veiling their excessive desires. They would all like to offer themselves as virgins to passion ; and if they are not, their dissimulation is always homage rendered to their love. These reflections passed rapidly through the young nobleman's mind and pleased him. Indeed, for both of them this constant scrutiny was likely to mark progress, and the lover

soon reached that phase of passion in which a man finds in his mistress's very defects, reasons for loving her more dearly.

Mademoiselle de Verneuil maintained her pensive attitude longer than the *émigré*; perhaps her imagination led her farther into the future ; the young man obeyed some one of the innumerable sentiments he was destined to feel in his man's life, and the young woman saw a whole life before her and took pleasure in planning to make it beautiful, in filling it with happiness and with noble and lofty sentiments. Happy in her thoughts, in love with such fancies as much as with the reality, with the future as with the present, Marie tried to retrace her steps in order to establish her power more firmly over that young heart, acting therein instinctively as all women act. After she had agreed with herself to give herself away absolutely, she desired, so to speak, to dispute about details ; she would have liked to be able to recall all her past actions, her words, her glances, in order to make them harmonize with the dignity befitting a woman who is loved. Thus her eyes at times expressed a sort of terror when she thought of the interview they had just had in which she had been so aggressive. But as she gazed at the other's face, instinct with force of character, she said to herself that so powerful a nature could afford to be generous, and congratulated herself that her lot was more glorious than that of many other women, as she found her lover a man of character, a man condemned to death who was risking his own head

and making war against the Republic. The thought that she might hold undisputed sway in such a heart, soon put a different face upon everything. Between the moment, five hours earlier, when she composed her features and her voice to cajole this same young gentleman, and the present moment when she could confound him with a glance, there was all the difference that there is between a dead and a living world. Hearty laughter, happy coquetries concealed a vast passion, which, like misfortune, presented itself with smiling face.

In Mademoiselle de Verneuil's existing frame of mind, external life assumed the character of a series of dissolving views. The calèche passed through villages, through valleys, over mountains of which no image remained in her memory. She arrived at Mayenne, the soldiers of the escort were replaced by others, Merle spoke to her, she replied, rode through the town and into the open country once more, but faces, houses, streets, landscape, men passed by like the indistinct shapes of a dream. Night fell. Marie was travelling beneath a diamond-studded sky, bathed in a soft light, on the Fougères road, without having once thought that the sky had changed its aspect, without knowing where Mayenne was or Fougères, or where she was going. That within a few hours she could be parted from the man of her heart, by whom she believed herself to be chosen, was not, in her mind, a possibility. Love is the only passion that endures neither past nor future. If her thoughts sometimes betrayed themselves in words,



she uttered sentences that seemed devoid of meaning, but that echoed in her lover's heart like promises of joy to come. In the eyes of the two witnesses of this budding passion, it progressed with terrifying rapidity. Francine knew Marie as well as the unknown female knew the young man, and their past experience made them await in silence some terrible catastrophe. In truth they had not long to wait for the end of the drama, which Mademoiselle de Verneuil had so sadly, perhaps unconsciously, called a tragedy.

When the four travellers were about a league beyond Mayenne, they heard a horse coming toward them at great speed ; when he reached the carriage, the rider leaned from his saddle to look at Mademoiselle de Verneuil, who recognized Corentin. That ill-omened personage ventured to make her a sign of intelligence, whose familiarity had in it something degrading ; and then he rode away, having turned her to stone by that gesture instinct with low cunning. The *émigré* seemed disagreeably affected by the incident, which certainly did not escape his pretended mother ; but Marie touched him lightly, and seemed by her glance to seek shelter in his heart, as her only place of refuge on earth. Thereupon the young man's brow cleared, under the influence of the emotion aroused by the movement with which she had, as if unintentionally, revealed the extent of her attachment. An inexplicable dread had put to flight all coquetry, and love showed its face for a moment unveiled. They held their peace

as if to prolong the sweetness of that moment. Unfortunately Madame du Gua, sitting beside them, saw everything ; and, like a miser who gives a feast, she seemed to be doling out the pieces to them and measuring off their lives.

Absorbed in their happiness, the lovers arrived, unmindful of the distance they had travelled, at that part of the road which runs through the valley of Ernée, the first of the three basins in which the events took place that form a prologue to this narrative. At that point, Francine noticed and called attention to certain strange figures that seemed to be moving like shadows among the trees, and the clumps of thorn-broom with which the fields were surrounded. When the coach reached the vicinity of the shadows, a general discharge and bullets whistling over their heads announced to the travellers that the shadows were real flesh and blood. The escort had fallen into an ambushade.

At that sharp fusillade, Captain Merle bitterly regretted having fallen in with the error made by Mademoiselle de Verneuil, who, believing that there was no danger in a rapid night journey, had let him take but sixty men. Acting upon Gérard's orders, the captain at once divided the little troop into two columns to hold the two sides of the road, and each of the two officers led his men at the double quick through the fields of briar and thorn-broom, eager to fall upon the assailants before counting them. The Blues began to beat the thick bushes to right and left with reckless intrepidity, and answered the

attack of the Chouans by a well-sustained fire into the under brush from which the shots came. Mademoiselle de Verneuil's first impulse was to jump out of the calèche and run back far enough to be out of range ; but, being ashamed of her fright, and impelled by the feeling that leads one to increase one's stature in the eyes of one's beloved, she stopped and tried to watch the combat coolly.

The *émigré* followed her, took her hand and placed it against his heart.

"I was afraid," she said with a smile ; "but now—"

At that moment her maid cried out in alarm :

"Marie, take care !"

But when Francine tried to jump from the vehicle, she was prevented by a strong hand. The weight of that enormous hand caused her to cry out, she turned, and held her peace when she recognized the features of Marche-à-Terre.

"So I shall owe to your terror the revelation of the sweetest secrets of your heart !" said the stranger to Mademoiselle de Verneuil. "Thanks to Francine, I learn that you bear the lovely name of Marie ; Marie, the name I have pronounced in all my suffering ! Marie, the name that I shall henceforth call upon in my joy, and shall never utter now without committing sacrilege, by confounding religion and love ! But would it be a crime to pray and to love at the same time ?"

At those words they exchanged a warm grasp of the hand, gazing into each other's eyes in silence,

and the violence of their sensations deprived them of the strength and power to express them.

“ *There’s no danger for you people !* ” said Marche-à-Terre roughly to Francine, giving a sinister tone of reproach to his harsh, guttural voice, and dwelling upon every word in a way to stupefy the innocent peasant girl.

For the first time, the girl saw a gleam of ferocity in Marche-à-Terre’s glance. The moonlight seemed to be the only light adapted to his face. The fierce Breton, holding his cap in one hand, his heavy carbine in the other, thick-set as a dwarf and enveloped in the waves of white light that gave such a strange aspect to the moving forms, belonged rather to the land of dreams than to the earth. The spectre and his reproof had something of the rapid movement of phantoms. He turned suddenly to Madame du Gua, with whom he exchanged a few words, and Francine, who had nearly forgotten Bas-Breton, could not understand what they said. The lady seemed to give Marche-à-Terre many orders. Their short conference was brought to a close by an imperious gesture from Madame du Gua calling the Chouan’s attention to the lovers. Before obeying, Marche-à-Terre cast a last glance at Francine, for whom he seemed to feel pity ; he would have liked to speak to her, but the girl knew that her lover was silent in obedience to orders. The fellow’s hard, tanned skin succeeded in forming wrinkles on his forehead, and his eyebrows contracted violently. Was he resisting his renewed orders to kill Made-

moiselle de Verneuil? The grimace made him more hideous than usual, doubtless, to Madame du Gua, but the gleam in his eyes became almost gentle to Francine, who, divining from that glance that she could force the savage's zeal to bend beneath her woman's will, hoped still to reign, after God, over that untutored heart.

Marie's beatific interview with her lover was interrupted by Madame du Gua, who rushed up to her, crying out as if some danger threatened her; but she simply wished to give one of the members of the Royalist committee of Alençon, whom she recognized, an opportunity to speak to the *émigré*.

"Distrust the girl you met at the *Trois Maures*!"

Having whispered those words in the young man's ear, the Chevalier de Valois, who was riding a small Breton horse, disappeared among the bushes from which he had come. At that moment the firing was remarkably sharp and well-sustained, but the two parties had not met hand to hand.

"Adjutant, isn't this a false attack to get possession of our travellers and force a ransom from them?—" asked Clef-des-Cœurs.

"Your feet are in their shoes, the devil take me if they're not!" replied Gérard, flying out on the road.

At that moment the fire of the Chouans slackened, for the communication the chevalier made to the young chief was the only object of the skirmish. Merle, when he saw them gliding away in small numbers through the hedges, thought it inadvisable

to engage in a dangerous and useless attempt to follow them. Gérard with a word or two, drew up the escort on the road, and resumed his march without loss. The captain was able to offer his hand to Mademoiselle de Verneuil to assist her into the coach, for the young nobleman stood as if struck by lightning. The Parisian, greatly surprised, resumed her seat without accepting the Republican's proffered assistance ; she turned her head toward her lover, saw that he was standing motionless, and was stupefied at the sudden change that the horseman's mysterious words had made in him. The young *émigré* returned slowly and his manner denoted profound disgust.

"Wasn't I right?" said Madame du Gua in the young man's ear as she led him back to the carriage ; "we are certainly in the hands of a creature with whom some bargain has been made for your head ; but, as she is fool enough to fall in love with you, instead of following her trade, don't you go and act like a child, but pretend to be in love with her till we reach La Vivetière.—Once there !—But suppose he is really in love with her now?" she said to herself when she saw the young man sitting in his seat as if he were fast asleep.



The calèche rolled heavily along over the sandy road. At the first glance Mademoiselle de Verneuil cast about her, everything seemed to have changed. Death was already gliding into her love. Perhaps there were only slight shades of difference ; but in the eyes of every loving woman such shades are as clearly marked as the brightest colors. Francine had understood from Marche-à-Terre's expression that her mistress's fate, over which she had bade him keep watch, was in other hands than his, and her face was as pale as death, nor could she restrain her tears when her mistress glanced at her. Madame du Gua had but ill success in concealing beneath false smiles the malevolence of a woman whose vengeance is at hand, and the sudden change that her obsequious affability to Mademoiselle de Verneuil produced in her bearing, her voice and her countenance was calculated to inspire dread in a keen-sighted person. Mademoiselle de Verneuil shivered instinctively, saying to herself :

“ Why do I shiver ?—She is his mother.”

But she trembled in every limb as the thought suddenly passed through her mind :

“ Is she really his mother ? ”

She caught a glimpse of a bottomless pit, which a last glance at the young man revealed to her distinctly.

“That woman loves him!” she thought. “But why does she overwhelm me with politeness after being so cold to me? Am I lost? Is she afraid of me?”

Meanwhile the young noble turned pale and red alternately, but maintained a calm attitude, lowering his eyes to conceal the conflicting emotions by which he was torn. His lips were pressed violently together so that their graceful curve was destroyed, and his color faded with the struggle of stormy thoughts. Mademoiselle de Verneuil could not even guess if there was still aught of love in his frenzy. The road, lined by woods on both sides at that spot, grew dark and prevented the silent actors from questioning each other with their eyes. The murmur of the wind, the rustling of the treetops, the measured tread of the escort gave to the scene a solemn character that quickened the beating of the heart. Mademoiselle de Verneuil could not long seek in vain the cause of this change. The memory of Corentin passed through her mind like a flash of lightning and brought with it the image of her real destiny, which suddenly confronted her. For the first time since the morning, she reflected seriously upon her position. Until that moment she had abandoned herself to the joy of loving, heedless of herself and the future. Unable longer to endure her suffering, she sought, she awaited, with the gentle



patience of love, a glance from the young man's eyes, and implored it so earnestly, her pallor and her trembling were so touchingly eloquent, that he wavered ; but the shock was only the more complete.

“ Are you ill, mademoiselle ? ” he asked.

The entire absence of affection in the voice, the very question, the look, the gesture, everything served to convince the poor girl that the events of that day were part of a mirage of the heart, which was fast vanishing like the half-formed clouds that the wind whirls away.

“ Am I ill ? ” she replied with a forced laugh ; “ I was about to ask you the same question.”

“ I thought that you understood each other,” said Madame du Gua with feigned amiability.

Neither the young man nor Mademoiselle de Verneuil replied. The girl, doubly insulted, was chagrined to find her potent beauty impotent. She knew that she could ascertain the cause of the present condition of affairs whenever she chose ; but, as she had little curiosity about it, the phenomenon of a woman shrinking from a secret was seen, it may be, for the first time. Human life is lamentably fruitful in situations in which, as the result of too profound meditation or of some catastrophe, our ideas cease to cohere, are without substance, without a starting-point, and in which the present finds nothing to connect it with the past or with the future. Such was Mademoiselle de Verneuil's con-

dition. She lay back in the back seat of the carriage like an uprooted tree. Silent and suffering, she looked at nobody, wrapped herself in her grief, and so exerted her will to remain in the unknown world in which the unhappy take refuge, that she saw absolutely nothing. Crows flew cawing over their heads ; but, although like all strong minds, she reserved a corner of her heart for superstitions, she paid no heed to them. They rode for some time in silence.

“Parted already !” said Mademoiselle de Verneuil to herself. “And yet, nobody about me spoke. Can it be that Corentin ! It would not be to his interest. Then who can have risen up to accuse me ? Our love hardly begun, and the horror of desertion already upon me ! I sow love and reap scorn. It must be my destiny to see happiness within my grasp and to lose it !”

She had an unfamiliar sense of trouble in her heart, for she was really in love and for the first time. However, she had not abandoned herself so entirely to her love that she could not find resources against her grief in the natural pride of a young and beautiful woman. The secret of her love, the secret often kept under torture, had not escaped her. She drew herself up, and, being ashamed to allow her passion to be measured by her silent suffering, she shook her head gayly, exhibited a smiling face, or rather mask, and struggled to restrain the emotion in her voice.

“Where are we ?” she asked Captain Merle,

who was always within a short distance of the coach.

“Three leagues and a half from Fougères, mademoiselle.

“Shall we arrive there soon?” she said, to encourage the young captain to enter into a conversation in which she promised herself that she would be very gracious to him.

“The leagues are not long ones,” replied the delighted Merle; “but in this region they take the liberty of never coming to an end. When you are at the top of the hill we are climbing, you will see a valley like the one we are leaving, and you can see the summit of La Pèlerine on the horizon. God grant that the Chouans may not take their revenge there! You can see that as we are constantly going up and down, we make little progress. From La Pèlerine you can see—”

At that name the *émigré* started for the second time, but so slightly that only Mademoiselle de Verneuil noticed the movement.

“What is this Pèlerine,” she asked quickly, interrupting the captain, who was deep in his Breton topography.

“It is a mountain which gives its name to the valley of Maine that we are about to enter, and which separates that province from the valley of Couësnon, at the further end of which lies Fougères, the first town in Bretagne. We fought there, in the latter part of Vendémiaire, with the Gars and his brigands. We were convoying conscripts, who, in order

not to leave their province, tried to kill us all on the edge of it; but Hulot's a rough Christian and gave them—"

"Then you must have seen the Gars?" she asked. "What sort of a looking man is he?"

Her keen, mischievous eyes did not move from the face of the pretended Vicomte de Bauvan.

"Oh! *mon Dieu*, mademoiselle," said Merle, in reply to this second interruption, "he looks so much like Citizen du Gua, that if he weren't wearing the uniform of the École Polytechnique, I'd wager he was the man."

Mademoiselle de Verneuil gazed fixedly at the cold, impassive young man who treated her with contempt, but she could detect nothing that betrayed a feeling of fear; she informed him by a bitter smile of her discovery at that moment of the secret so treacherously kept by him; then, in a mocking voice, her nostrils swelling with joy and her head on one side so that she could keep her eye on the young nobleman and see Merle at the same time, she said to the latter:

"That young officer, captain, causes the First Consul much uneasiness. He is very daring they say; but he goes into certain rash enterprises like an idiot, especially where women are concerned."

"We rely upon that trait," said the captain, "to enable us to settle our account with him. If we could get hold of him for a couple of hours, we'd put a little lead in his head. If he should fall in

with us, Coblentz would do as much by us and put out our lights ; and so, *par pari*—”

“ Oh ! we have nothing to fear,” said the *émigré*. “ Your men can’t go as far as La Pèlerine, they are too tired, and, if you consent, they can rest within a few steps of this place. My mother is to leave the coach at La Vivetière, and the road leading to it is within a gunshot or two. The ladies would both be glad to rest, they must be very much fatigued, having come from Alençon without a stop !—And then,” he added with forced politeness, turning to his mistress, “ Mademoiselle has been generous enough to make our journey no less safe than agreeable, perhaps she will deign to accept my mother’s invitation to supper.—At all events, captain,” he added, addressing Merle once more, “ the times are not so out of joint that we can’t still find a cask of cider for your men to broach at La Vivetière. The Gars can’t have taken it all ; at least my mother thinks not—”

“ Your mother ? ” Mademoiselle de Verneuil repeated, interrupting him ironically, and making no reply to his strange invitation to her.

“ My age seems incredible to you this evening eh, mademoiselle ? ” said Madame du Gua. “ I had the misfortune to be married very young, my son was born when I was fifteen—”

“ Aren’t you mistaken, madame ? weren’t you thirty ? ”

Madame du Gua turned pale as she swallowed this sarcasm ; she longed to be able to take her

revenge, but she was forced to smile, for she desired at any cost, even at the cost of the most biting epigrams, to ascertain what feeling really actuated the girl ; and so she pretended not to understand.

“The Chouans never had a more cruel leader than this one, if we are to believe the current reports concerning him,” she said, addressing Francine and her mistress at once.

“Oh ! as to his being cruel, I don’t believe it,” replied Mademoiselle de Verneuil ; “but he knows how to lie and seems to me very credulous ; the leader of a party ought not to be anyone’s plaything.”

“Do you know him ?” asked the young *émigré* coolly.

“No,” she rejoined, with a scornful glance, “I thought I knew him—”

“Oh ! mademoiselle, he’s a *malin* beyond question !” said the captain, shaking his head, and expressing with a significant gesture the peculiar meaning then attaching to that word, which it has since lost. “These old families sometimes put out vigorous shoots. He returns from a country where the *ci-devants* haven’t been altogether comfortable, so they say ; and men, you see, are like medlars, they ripen on the straw. If that fellow is clever, he will keep us running after him a long while. He has known enough to fight our free companies with skirmishers and to neutralize the efforts of the government. If one Royalist village is burned, he burns two Republican villages. He covers a vast extent

of territory and thus forces us to employ a large number of troops at a time when we have none too many !—Oh ! he knows his business.”

“ He assassinates his native country ! ” said Gérard’s deep voice, interrupting the captain.

“ If his death will relieve the country,” rejoined the nobleman, “ pray, shoot him at once.”

With that, he proceeded to probe Mademoiselle de Verneuil’s mind with a glance, and there ensued between them one of those silent scenes of which the tongue can reproduce but very imperfectly the dramatic vivacity and the illusive finesse. Danger arouses interest. When it is a matter of life and death, the vilest criminal always excites a little pity. Now, although Mademoiselle de Verneuil was certain at that time that the lover who disdained her was this redoubtable Royalist leader, she did not wish as yet to make sure of it by his punishment ; she had a curiosity of a very different sort to satisfy. She preferred therefore to doubt or to believe according as her passion moved her, and she began to play with the danger. Her glance, alive with mocking perfidy, called the young nobleman’s attention to the soldiers with an air of triumph ; by bringing him thus face to face with the image of his danger, she amused herself by forcing him to feel that his life depended upon a single word, and her lips seemed to be already moving to utter it. Like an American savage, she questioned the muscles of her enemy’s face as he stood bound to the stake, and brandished her *tomahawk* gracefully, tasting the joys of innocent

vengeance, and punishing like a mistress who still loves.

“If I had a son like yours, madame,” she said to Madame du Gua, who was visibly terrified, “I would wear mourning for him on the day that I abandoned him to danger.”

She received no reply. Twenty times she turned her face to the officers and turned it sharply back to Madame du Gua, but did not succeed in surprising between her and the Gars any secret signal to confirm an intimacy which she suspected, and as to which she wished to remain in doubt. A woman is so fond of hesitating in a life and death struggle, when she holds the decree! The young general smiled with his calmest manner, and endured without flinching the torture that Mademoiselle de Verneuil forced him to undergo; his attitude and the expression of his face denoted a man heedless of the dangers by which he was surrounded, and sometimes he seemed to say to her: “Here is the opportunity to avenge your wounded vanity, seize it! I should be in despair if I had to renounce my contempt for you.” Mademoiselle de Verneuil began to scrutinize him from the height of her position with an impertinence and a dignity that were only apparent, for, at the bottom of her heart, she admired his courage and calmness. Overjoyed to learn that her lover bore an ancient title, whose privileges are agreeable to every woman, she was conscious of some pleasure in meeting him in a situation where, as the champion of a cause ennobled by misfortune,



he was struggling with all the faculties of a powerful mind, against a Republic so many times victorious, and in seeing him face to face with danger, displaying the personal bravery that exerts such a power over the female heart ; twenty times she put him to the test, obeying perhaps the instinct that impels a woman to play with her prey as the cat plays with the mouse she has caught.

“By virtue of what law, pray, do you condemn Chouans to death ?” she asked Merle.

“Why, by the law of the 14th Fructidor last, which declares all the revolted departments outside the law, and establishes martial law in them,” replied the Republican.

“To what do I now owe the honor of attracting your glances ?” she asked the young chief, who was examining her closely.

“To a sentiment which no gentleman could express to any lady whomsoever,” replied the Marquis de Montauran in an undertone, leaning toward her.—“One must have lived in these times,” he said aloud, “to see young girls performing the functions of the executioner and outdoing him by the way in which they play with the axe.”

She gazed fixedly at Montauran ; then, delighted to be insulted by him at the very moment that she held his life in her hands, she said in his ear, with a soft, sly laugh :

“You have too wicked a head, the executioners wouldn’t want it, so I’ll keep it.”

The stupefied marquis gazed for a moment at the

inexplicable creature, whose love triumphed over everything, even the most biting insults, and who avenged herself by forgiving an outrage that women never forgive. His eyes were less stern, less cold, and even a melancholy expression stole over his features. His passion was stronger already than he himself thought. Mademoiselle de Verneuil, content with this feeble pledge of the reconciliation she had sought, bestowed a tender glance upon him and a smile that resembled a kiss ; then she threw herself back in her seat, not choosing to risk any farther the future of that drama of happiness, believing that she had tied the knot with that smile. She was so lovely ! she knew so well how to triumph over obstacles in love ! she was so thoroughly accustomed to make sport of everything, to trust to chance ! she was so fond of the unexpected and the tempests of life.

Soon, at the marquis's order, the carriage left the main road and turned into a narrow lane leading to La Vivetière, between high banks planted with apple trees, which made of it a ditch rather than a road. The travellers left the Blues behind to make their way more slowly to the manor-house, whose grayish peaks appeared and disappeared among the trees along the road, where some of the soldiers were busily engaged disputing possession of their shoes with the heavy clay.

“ This strongly resembles the road to paradise ! ” cried Beau-Pied.

Thanks to the expert management of the postilion,

Mademoiselle de Verneuil soon saw the château of La Vivetière. It was situated on the ridge of a sort of promontory, between two deep ponds, so that it was impossible to reach it except by keeping closely to a causeway. The part of this peninsula occupied by the buildings and the gardens was protected to a considerable distance behind the château by a broad ditch which received the superfluous water from the two ponds with which it was connected, and thus in reality formed an almost impregnable island, an invaluable retreat for a leader who could be surprised only by treachery.

When she heard the gate creak on its rusty hinges and saw that they were beneath the ogive arch of a gateway ruined in the previous war, Mademoiselle de Verneuil put out her head. The gloomy colors of the picture presented to her view effaced almost completely the thoughts of love and coquetry in which she had found such consolation. The carriage entered a large, almost square courtyard, bordered by the steep banks of the ponds. Those wild banks, bathed by the green, slimy waters of the ponds, had no other embellishment than aquatic trees devoid of leaves, whose stunted trunks with enormous hoary heads, rising above the reeds and bushes, resembled grotesque monkeys. Their ungraceful rows seemed to become alive and to speak when the frogs fled from them, croaking loudly, and the moorhens, awakened by the rumbling of the coach, fluttered splashing over the surface of the ponds. The courtyard, overgrown with tall, withered

weeds, thorn-broom, dwarfed or parasitic shrubs, was far removed from aught resembling order or beauty. The château seemed to have been abandoned for a long while. The roofs seemed to bend beneath the weight of the vegetation that abounded there. The walls, although constructed of the hard, slaty stone in which the country abounds, presented numerous crevices to which the ivy attached its claws. Two wings at right angles connected by a high tower and facing the pond, composed the whole of the château whose rotting doors and shutters, rusty balustrades and ruined windows seemed certain to fall with the first breath of a storm. The north wind was blowing through the ruins at that time, and the uncertain moonlight imparted to them the features and character of a huge spectre. One must have seen the colors of those gray and blue granitic stones, mingled with the black and yellow slates, to realize the truth of the picture presented by the sight of that empty, frowning carcass. The disjointed stones, the windows without panes, the crenelated tower, the dilapidated roofs gave it altogether the appearance of a skeleton ; and the birds of prey that flew about crying overhead, added yet more to the vague resemblance. A few tall firs, planted behind the house, waved their dark foliage above the roof, and yew-trees, trimmed to decorate the corners, framed the buildings in melancholy festoons, like the hangings of a funeral procession. The shape of the doors too, the coarseness of the decorations, the lack of uni-

formity in the buildings, all denoted one of the feudal manor-houses of which Bretagne was so proud, and with good reason perhaps, for they formed a sort of monumental history upon that Gaelic territory of the nebulous times preceding the establishment of the monarchy.

Mademoiselle de Verneuil, to whose mind the word *château* always suggested a structure of the conventional type, was profoundly impressed by the dismal features of the picture; she jumped lightly to the ground, and standing by herself, gazed at it in terror, reflecting as to the course she had better pursue. Francine heard Madame du Gua give vent to a sigh of joy at finding herself out of reach of the Blues, and an involuntary exclamation escaped her when the gate was closed and she saw that they were shut up in that natural fortress. Montauran had hurried to Mademoiselle de Verneuil's side, divining the thoughts by which she was absorbed.

"This *château*," he said with a slight inflection of melancholy in his tone, "has been ruined by war, as the plans I was constructing for our happiness have been ruined by you."

"How, pray?" she asked in great surprise.

"Are you *a lovely, NOBLE and bright young woman?*" he said ironically, repeating the words she had coquettishly uttered during their conversation on the road.

"Who has told you the contrary?"

"Friends worthy of belief, who are interested in my safety and are on the watch to defeat treachery."

“Treachery!” she repeated mockingly. “Are Alençon and Hulot already so far away? You have no memory, a dangerous fault for the leader of a party!—But, as your friends reign so absolutely in your heart,” she added, with rare impertinence, “keep your friends. Nothing is comparable to the pleasures of friendship. Adieu! neither myself nor the soldiers of the Republic will enter these walls.”

She rushed to the gate, impelled by wounded pride and disdain, but there was a nobleness and a despair in her very gait that changed all the marquis’s ideas; it cost him too dearly to renounce his desires for him not to be credulous and imprudent. He also was in love. Neither of the two lovers had any wish to prolong their quarrel.

“Add one word and I believe you,” he said in a tone of entreaty.

“A word?” she repeated ironically, pressing her lips together, “a word? Not even a gesture!”

“At least, scold me,” he continued, trying to take a hand which she withheld; “if, however, you dare to sulk with a rebel leader, now as suspicious and threatening as he recently was trustful and joyous.”

Marie having looked at him without anger, he added:

“You have my secret and I haven’t yours.”

At those words the alabaster brow seemed to grow dark. Marie glanced angrily at the marquis and answered:

“My secret? never!”

In love, every word, every glance has its momentary eloquence; but Mademoiselle de Verneuil's words expressed nothing definite, and, clever as Montauran was, the secret of her exclamation was impenetrable, although her voice betrayed extraordinary emotion which must have keenly piqued his curiosity.

“You have a pleasant way of banishing suspicions,” he rejoined.

“Do you still retain suspicions of me?” she asked, looking him in the face as if she would have said: “Have you any rights over me?”

“Mademoiselle,” he replied, with a submissive but firm manner, “your power over the Republican troops, this escort of yours—”

“Ah! you remind me. Will my escort and myself, your protectors in fact, be safe here?” she asked in a slightly ironical tone.

“Yes, on my word as a gentleman. Whoever you may be, you and yours have nothing to fear under my roof.”

The words were uttered in obedience to such a loyal and generous impulse that Mademoiselle de Verneuil could but feel entirely at ease as to the safety of the Republicans. She was about to speak when Madame du Gua's arrival imposed silence upon her. That lady had succeeded in overhearing or in guessing at a portion of the conversation between the lovers, and had conceived no little anxiety when she saw them in a position which no longer

denoted the slightest hostility. When he caught sight of her, the marquis offered Mademoiselle de Verneuil his hand and walked quickly toward the house, as if to shake off an undesirable companion.

“I am in the way!” said Madame du Gua to herself, remaining where she stood.

She watched the two reconciled lovers walking slowly toward the main entrance to the house, where they stopped to talk as soon as they had left her some distance behind.

“Yes, yes, I am in the way!” she repeated; “but in a little while that creature will cease to be in my way; the pond shall be her grave, *pardieu*.— Shall I not keep your word as a gentleman? once under the water, what has one to fear? won’t she be in a place of safety?”

She was gazing fixedly at the calm mirror-like surface of the little lake on the right, when suddenly she heard a rustling among the reeds on the bank, and saw in the moonlight the figure of Marche-à-Terre, rising out of the rough bark of an old willow. One must have known the Chouan well to distinguish him amid that assemblage of distorted trunks with which his was so easily confused. Madame du Gua first glanced suspiciously around; she saw the postilion leading his horses to the stables in that wing of the château that faced the bank where Marche-à-Terre was in hiding; she saw Francine walking toward the lovers who at that moment were oblivious of the whole earth; then she walked forward, putting her finger to her lips to enjoin silence,



and the Chouan saw rather than heard the following words :

“ How many of you are here? ”

“ Eighty-seven.”

“ There are only sixty-five of them, I counted them.”

“ Good,” replied the fellow, with savage satisfaction.

Closely observant of Francine’s slightest gesture, the Chouan disappeared in the shell of the willow when he saw her turn to look for her enemy, whom she instinctively kept her eye upon.

Seven or eight persons, attracted by the rumbling of the carriage, appeared at the top of the main staircase and cried :

“ It’s the Gars !—it’s he, here he is ! ”

These exclamations brought other men to the spot, and their presence interrupted the conversation between the two lovers. The Marquis de Montauran rushed up to the gentlemen, enjoined silence upon them by an imperative gesture and pointed to the end of the avenue, where the Republican soldiers were just coming in sight. At sight of the well-known blue uniforms with red lapels and the gleaming bayonets, the amazed conspirators exclaimed :

“ Have you come here to betray us? ”

“ I should not have warned you of the danger in that case,” replied the marquis, smiling bitterly.—“ Yonder Blues,” he continued after a pause, “ form the escort of this young lady, whose generous inter-

position saved us as by a miracle from a serious danger to which we very nearly fell victims at an inn in Alençon. We will tell you the story. Mademoiselle and her escort are here on the faith of my word, and they must be welcomed as friends."

Meanwhile Madame du Gua and Francine had arrived at the steps, the marquis gallantly offered his hand to Mademoiselle de Verneuil, the group of gentlemen stood aside in two lines to allow them to pass, and all of them tried to see the stranger's features, for Madame du Gua had already intensified their curiosity by divers stealthy signs. In the first room Mademoiselle de Verneuil saw a large table handsomely laid for twenty guests. This dining-room communicated with a vast salon where the whole party were soon assembled. The two rooms harmonized with the general aspect of ruin presented by the outside of the château. The wainscoting of polished walnut, coarsely and roughly made and wretchedly carved, was cracked and bulging and seemed ready to fall. Its dark color increased the dismal aspect of the mirrorless, curtainless apartments, where the few pieces of venerable furniture were in harmony with the dilapidated whole. Marie saw maps and plans laid out upon a large table, and in corners of the room stacks of carbines and other weapons. Everything indicated an important conference between the leaders of the Vendéans and those of the Chouans. The marquis escorted Mademoiselle de Verneuil to a vast worm-eaten easy-chair that stood near the hearth, and

Francine took her place beside her mistress, leaning on the back of that antique piece of furniture.

“ You will permit me to perform the duties of host for a moment ? ” said the marquis, leaving the two strangers and mingling with the groups of his guests.

Francine noticed that all the leaders, at a word from Montauran, made haste to conceal their weapons, the maps and everything likely to arouse the suspicions of the Republican officers ; some laid aside their broad leather belts containing pistols and hunting knives. The marquis urged the greatest discretion and then left the room, excusing himself on the ground of the necessity of providing for the inconvenient guests whom chance had sent him. Mademoiselle de Verneuil, who had stretched out her feet to warm them at the fire, allowed Montauran to go without turning her head and defeated the hopes of the guests, all of whom were anxious to see her face. Francine only, therefore, witnessed the change produced by the young leader’s departure. The gentlemen formed in a group about Madame du Gua, and there was not one of them who did not look more than once at the two strangers during their whispered conversation with her.

“ You know Montauran ! ” she said to them ; “ he fell in love all in a moment with this girl, and you can understand that the best advice, from my lips, seemed suspicious to him. Our friends in Paris, Messieurs de Valois and D’Esgrignon of Alençon, warned him of the trap they meant to set for him by throwing a woman at his head, and yet he takes

up with the first one he meets ; a girl who, according to such information as I have been able to gather, assumes a great name in order to dishonor it, who—etc., etc.”

This lady, in whom the reader will have recognized the female who gave the orders for the attack on the *turgotine*, will continue to bear in this narrative the name under cover of which she eluded the dangers that threatened her at Alençon. The publication of her real name would serve only to wound a noble family, already deeply afflicted by the misdeeds of this young woman, whose destiny, by the way, has been made the subject of another Scene. The curiosity of the assemblage soon became impertinent and almost hostile. Some decidedly harsh exclamations reached the ears of Francine, who, after whispering a word to her mistress, took refuge in a window recess. Marie rose, turned toward the insolent group and met their glances with a dignified, even scornful expression. Her beauty, her refined manners and her haughtiness effected a sudden change in the disposition of her enemies and drew from them a flattering murmur. Two or three men, whose exterior betrayed those habits of courtesy and gallantry which are acquired in the exalted sphere of courts, approached Marie with perfect courtesy ; her calm reserve imposed respect on them and not one of them dared address her ; far from being accused by them, she seemed to be passing judgment upon them.

The leaders in this war, undertaken for God and

the king, bore but little resemblance to the fanciful portraits she had amused herself by drawing in her mind. The struggle, veritably a grand struggle, was reduced to pitifully mean proportions in her eyes, when, with the exception of two or three vigorous, powerful faces, she saw none but petty provincial squires, all alike without expression or animation. After soaring in the realms of poetry, Marie suddenly fell back into reality. Those faces seemed to denote, first of all, a liking for intrigue rather than a love of glory ; self-interest was really the cause for which all those gentlemen took up arms ; and, even if they should become heroes on the battlefield, in that room they appeared as they were. The destruction of her illusions made Made-moiselle de Verneuil unjust and prevented her from recognizing the genuine devotion that made several of those men so remarkable. However, most of them did display great vulgarity in their manners. If some few noteworthy faces stood out among the others, their effect was diminished by the forms and etiquette of the aristocracy. Although Marie accorded them as a whole, shrewdness and intelligence, she found them completely lacking in the magnificent simplicity to which the men of the Republic and its triumphs had accustomed her. This nocturnal assemblage in the old ruined castle among the dilapidated decorations well assorted with the faces of the participants, made her smile, she chose to see therein a symbolical picture of the monarchy. Soon she thought, with keen delight, that, at all events,

the marquis played the leading rôle among these men, whose only merit in her eyes was their devotion to a lost cause. She sketched the figure of her lover against that group, amused herself by making it stand out in bold relief, and saw in those thin, gaunt faces naught but the instruments of his noble schemes.



At that moment the marquis's steps were heard in the adjoining room. The conspirators suddenly separated into several groups and the whispering ceased. Like school children who had been plotting mischief in their master's absence, they made a great affectation of orderliness and silence. Montauran entered the room and Marie had the satisfaction of admiring him as he stood amid his guests, of whom he was the youngest, the comeliest, the first. Like a king holding court, he went from group to group, distributed slight nods, grasps of the hand, glances, words of intelligence or reproof, performing his part as leader of a party, with a grace and self-possession difficult to understand in the young man she had at first accused of frivolity. The marquis's presence put an end to the curious scrutiny to which Made-moiselle de Verneuil had been subjected ; but before long the malevolent suggestions of Madame du Gua produced their effect. The Baron du Guénic, known as the *Intime*, who alone, among all those men brought together by momentous affairs, seemed authorized by his name and rank to deal familiarly with Montauran, took him by the arm and led him into a corner.

“My dear marquis,” he said, “it pains us to see that you are on the point of doing a terribly foolish thing.”

“What do you mean by such words?”

“Why, don’t you really know where this girl comes from, who she really is, and what her designs are upon you?”

“My dear Intimé, between ourselves, my whim will be at an end to-morrow morning.”

“Very good; but suppose the creature betrays you before daybreak?”

“I will answer that question when you tell me why she hasn’t done it already,” rejoined Montauran, assuming by way of jest a conceited air.

“Why, if you have made an impression on her, perhaps she doesn’t want to betray you till *her* whim has passed.”

“My dear fellow, look at that charming girl, study her manners and then dare to say that she’s not a woman of distinction! If she should bestow favorable glances on you, wouldn’t you feel in the bottom of your heart, some respect for her? A certain person has already prejudiced you against her; but, after what we have said to each other, if she were one of those abandoned creatures of whom our friends have told us, I would kill her.”

“Do you suppose,” interposed Madame du Gua, “that Fouché is fool enough to send you a girl picked up on a street corner? He proportions the seductions to your merits. But if you are blind, your friends will have their eyes open to keep watch over you.”



“Madame,” replied the Gars, with an angry glance at her, “do not think of taking any steps against that young woman or against her escort, or nothing will protect you from my vengeance. It is my wish that mademoiselle be treated with the greatest respect and as a woman who belongs to me. We are connected with the Verneuil, I believe.”

The opposition encountered by the marquis produced the effect that such obstacles ordinarily produce upon young men. Although he had, to all appearance, treated Mademoiselle de Verneuil very slightly and given his friend to understand that his passion for her was a caprice, he had nevertheless, impelled by a sense of pride, taken a long step forward. Having admitted his interest in the woman, he felt that his honor was concerned in enforcing due respect for her; he went therefore from group to group, declaring, with the air of a man whom it would have been dangerous to cross, that the stranger was really Mademoiselle de Verneuil. All the muttering ceased at once.

When Montauran had established a sort of harmony in the salon and satisfied everybody's demands, he eagerly approached his mistress, and said to her in an undertone :

“Those people have robbed me of a moment's happiness.”

“I am very glad to have you with me,” she replied with a smile. “I warn you that I am curious ; so don't tire of my questions too soon. Tell me, in

the first place, who that man is who wears a green cloth jacket ? ”

“ That is the famous Major Brigaut, from the Marais, a companion of the late Mercier, called La Vendée.”

“ And who is the stout clergyman with the rubicund face, with whom he is talking about me now ? ” queried Mademoiselle de Verneuil.

“ Do you want to know what they are saying ? ”

“ Do I want to know ?—is that a question ? ”

“ But I couldn’t tell you without wounding you.”

“ When you allow me to be insulted without taking vengeance for the insults I receive under your roof, adieu, marquis ! I prefer not to remain here a moment. I am already remorseful for having deceived those poor Republicans, the loyal, trustful fellows.”

She took a few steps toward the door and the marquis followed her.

“ My dear Marie, listen to me. On my honor, I imposed silence on their unkind remarks before I knew whether they were true or false. Nevertheless, in my position, when our friends in the department at Paris have warned me to distrust every woman of any sort whom I might fall in with, informing me that Fouché has undertaken to employ a Judith from the streets against me, my best friends may well think that you are too beautiful to be a virtuous woman.”

As he spoke the marquis fixed his eyes upon

Mademoiselle de Verneuil's, who blushed and could not restrain a few tears.

"I have deserved these insults," she said. "I would like to see you thoroughly convinced that I am a despicable creature, and know at the same time that you love me—then, I should no longer doubt you. I believed you when you deceived me, and you do not believe me when I speak the truth! Let us have done with it, monsieur," she said, frowning and turning as pale as death. "Adieu."

She rushed desperately from the dining-room.

"Marie, my life is yours!" said the young marquis in her ear.

She stopped and looked at him.

"No, no," she said, "I will be generous. Adieu. I did not think, when I accompanied you, of my own past or your future; I was mad."

"What! you leave me at the moment I offer you my life?"

"You offer it in a moment of passion, of desire—"

"Without regret, and forever," he said.

She returned to the room. To conceal his emotion, the marquis continued the conversation.

"The stout man whose name you asked me is a redoubtable fellow, Abbé Gudin, one of those Jesuits who are obstinate enough, devoted enough perhaps, to remain in France despite the edict of 1763, which banished them. He is the firebrand of the war in these regions and the propagator of the religious association called the Sacred Heart. Accustomed to use religion as an instrument, he persuades his

fellow-members that they will be resurrected, and knows how to keep their fanaticism alive by adroit sermonizing. You see how it is ; we must make use of every man's private interests to attain a great end. Therein lies the whole secret of politics."

"And that old man, still hale and strong, and apparently all muscles, whose face is so repulsive ! Look, there, the one dressed in the rags of an advocate's gown."

"Advocate ! he claims the rank of field-marshal. Have you never heard of Longuy ? "

"Can that be he ! " said Mademoiselle de Verneuil in dismay. "You make use of such men ! "

"Hush ! he may hear you. Do you see that other man in criminal conversation with Madame du Gua ? "

"The man in black who looks like a judge ? "

"That's one of our negotiators, La Billardière, son of a councillor in the parliament of Bretagne, whose name is something like Flamet ; but he has the confidence of the princes."

"And his neighbor, the one who is just putting away his clay pipe, and who has all the fingers of his right hand on the panel like a rustic ? " queried Mademoiselle de Verneuil, laughing.

"Pardieu ! you have guessed right ; he was once head keeper for that lady's deceased husband. He commands one of the companies with which I oppose the flying squadrons. He and Marche-à-Terre are perhaps the most conscientious servants the king has here."

“ But who is she ? ”

“ She,” replied the marquis, “ was Charette’s last mistress. She has great influence over all these people.”

“ Has she remained faithful to him ? ”

The marquis’s only reply was a little incredulous grimace.

“ And do you think highly of her ? ”

“ You are in truth very curious.”

“ She is my enemy, because she can no longer be my rival,” laughed Mademoiselle de Verneuil ; “ I forgive her her past errors, may she forgive mine !— And that officer with the moustaches ? ”

“ Forgive me if I do not name him. He intends to get rid of the First Consul by attacking him with armed hand. Whether he succeeds or not, you will hear of him, he will become famous.”

“ And you came here to take command of such people ? ” she exclaimed in horror. “ These are the king’s defenders ! Where, then, are the gentlemen and nobles ? ”

“ Why, they are scattered through all the courts of Europe,” said the marquis insolently. “ Who, then, enlists kings, cabinets and armies in the service of the house of Bourbon and hurls them at this Republic, which threatens all monarchies with death, and social order with complete destruction ? ”

“ Ah ! ” she said with generous emotion, “ be henceforth the pure spring from which I shall draw all the ideas I have still to acquire—I consent to that. But let me think that you are the only nobleman

who does his duty in attacking France with Frenchmen and not with the aid of foreigners. I am a woman, and I feel that if my child should strike me in anger, I could forgive him ; but if he looked on in cold blood while I was torn to pieces by a stranger, I should consider him a monster."

"You will always be a Republican," said the marquis, yielding to the blissful emotion excited by the generous accents that confirmed him in his presumptions.

"Republican ? No, I am one no longer. I should not esteem you if you submitted to the First Consul," she replied ; "but neither should I like to see you at the head of people who lay waste one corner of France instead of attacking the whole Republic. For whom are you fighting ? What do you expect of a king restored to the throne by your hands ? One woman has already undertaken that noble work, and the king she set free allowed her to be burned alive. Those men are the anointed of the Lord and it is dangerous to touch sacred things. Let God alone place them, displace them and replace them on their purple stools. If you have weighed the reward you will receive, you are, in my eyes, ten times greater than I thought ; so trample me under your feet if you choose, I shall be happy."

"You are entrancing ! Don't try to convert these gentry or I should be left without soldiers."

"Ah ! if you would let me convert you, we would go a thousand leagues from here."

"These men whom you seem to despise will not

fear to lay down their lives in the struggle," rejoined the marquis in a more serious tone, "and their offences will be forgotten. Moreover, if my efforts are crowned with some little success, will not the laurels of triumph cover everything?"

"You are the only one here who risks anything so far as I can see."

"I am not the only one," he replied with true modesty. "Yonder are the two new leaders of La Vendée. The first, whom you have heard called Grand-Jacques, is the Comte de Fontaine; the other is La Billardière, whom I have already pointed out to you."

"But do you forget Quiberon, where La Billardière played a most singular part?" she rejoined, as if she had suddenly remembered something.

"La Billardière has taken much upon himself, believe me. The service of princes is not a bed of roses."

"Oh! you make me shudder!" cried Marie. "Marquis," she continued in a tone that seemed to denote reticence upon some personal matter, "an instant is sufficient to destroy an illusion and tear the veil from secrets on which the life and happiness of many people depend—"

She checked herself as if she were afraid of saying too much, and added:

"I should be glad to know that the soldiers of the Republic are in safety."

"I will be prudent," he said, smiling to disguise his emotion; "but say no more about your soldiers,

I answered for their welfare on my word as a gentleman."

"And, after all, by what right should I seek to direct you?" she replied. "Between ourselves, be master always. Did I not tell you that it would drive me wild to reign over a slave?"

"Monsieur le marquis," said Major Brigaut respectfully, interrupting the conversation, "are the Blues to remain here long?"

"They will go on as soon as they have rested," cried Marie.

The marquis cast a keen glance over the assemblage, noticed signs of excitement, left Mademoiselle de Verneuil, and allowed Madame du Gua to take his place beside her. That woman wore a laughing, treacherous mask which the young chief's bitter smile did not disturb. At that moment Francine uttered a cry which she promptly stifled. Mademoiselle de Verneuil, amazed to see her faithful peasant rushing toward the dining-room, looked at Madame du Gua, and her surprise was heightened at sight of the pallor that overspread her enemy's face. Curious to discover the secret of her maid's abrupt departure, she walked to the window recess, whither her rival followed her in order to banish the suspicions any imprudent act might have aroused, and smiled at her with indescribable malevolence, when, after they had both cast a glance at the lake, they returned together to the hearth, Marie having seen nothing to account for Francine's flight, and Madame du Gua content to find her orders obeyed.



The lake on whose bank Marche-à-Terre had appeared at Madame du Gua's summons, was connected with the ditch that protected the gardens, describing an irregular, winding course, in some places broad as a pond, in others as narrowly confined as artificial streams in a park. The steep bank bathed by its clear waters was within a few yards of the window. As she gazed at the black shadows cast on the surface of the water by the top of some old willows, Francine noticed heedlessly the uniform curves described by their branches in the light breeze. Suddenly it seemed to her that one of their forms was moving over the mirror-like surface with the irregular, spontaneous movements that denote life. That figure, vaguely defined as it was, looked like a man. At first Francine attributed the vision to the imperfect outlines produced by the moon shining through the foliage; but soon a second head made its appearance and then others, still at some distance. The small bushes on the bank bent over and flew violently back. Francine then saw the long line of bushes moving this way and that, like one of the great Indian serpents of fabulous proportions. Soon several luminous points shone out and flitted about among the clumps of broom and the tall briars.

Watching with redoubled attention, Marche-à-Terre's sweetheart thought she could recognize the first of the black figures in the centre of the moving bank. Indistinct as the outlines of the figure were, the beating of her heart convinced her that it was

Marche-a-Terre. Enlightened by a gesture and impatient to know if that mysterious proceeding did not conceal some treachery, she darted into the courtyard. When she reached the centre of that expanse of verdure, she looked alternately at the two wings of the building and at the two banks, but failed to discover any trace of that silent commotion on the bank opposite the inhabited wing. She listened attentively and could make out a slight rustling like that made by the footsteps of a wild beast in the silence of the forest. She started but did not tremble. Although still young and innocent, her eager curiosity naturally suggested a stratagem. Her eyes fell upon the mail-coach, she jumped into it, out of sight, and raised her head as cautiously as the hare in whose ears rings the sound of the distant hunt. She saw Pille-Miche come out of the stable. The Chouan was accompanied by two peasants, and all three carried bundles of straw ; they strewed the straw on the ground in such a way as to form a long bed in front of the inhabited wing, parallel to the bank lined with stunted trees, and the Chouans walked upon it in silence that was ominous of some ghastly ruse in preparation.

“You give them straw as if they were really going to sleep there—Enough, Pille-Miche ! enough ! ” said a hoarse, low voice that Francine recognized.

“Won’t they sleep there ? ” rejoined Pille-Miche, with a coarse, stupid laugh.—“ But ain’t you afraid the Gars will be angry ? ” he added, in so low a tone that Francine did not hear.

“Very well, let him be angry,” replied Marche-à-Terre under his breath; “but we shall have killed the Blues all the same.—There’s a carriage we must put out of the way,” he added.

Pille-Miche pulled the carriage by the pole and Marche-à-Terre pushed it by one of the wheels so swiftly that Francine found herself in the barn and just about to be locked in there before she had had time to reflect on her situation. Pille-Miche went away to help to roll out the cask of cider that the marquis had ordered to be distributed to the soldiers of the escort. Marche-à-Terre was walking by the vehicle, intending to leave the barn and secure the door, when he found his progress arrested by a hand that grasped the long hairs of his goatskin. He recognized a pair of eyes whose softness exerted a magnetic power over him, and he stood for a moment as if under a spell. Francine hastily leaped out of the coach and said to him in the aggressive voice that is wonderfully attractive in an irritated woman :

“Pierre, what news did you bring that woman and her son on the road? What are they doing here? Why do you hide? I want to know everything.”

These words brought to the Chouan’s face an expression Francine did not know. He led his innocent mistress to the door; there, he turned her face so that the pale light of the moon fell upon it, and answered, gazing at her with a terrible gleam in his eye :

“Yes, at the risk of my soul! Francine, I will tell you, but not till you have sworn on this rosary—”

And he drew an old rosary from under his goat-skin.

“On this rosary, which you know,” he continued, “to answer the truth to a single question.”

Francine blushed as she looked at the rosary, which was doubtless a pledge of their love.

“That is what you once swore on—” continued the Chouan, deeply moved.

He did not finish. The peasant girl placed her hand over her uncouth lover’s lips to impose silence on him.

“Do I need to swear?” she asked.

He gently took his mistress’s hand, looked at her for an instant, and went on:

“Is the young lady you serve really named *Made-moiselle de Verneuil*?”

Francine stood with her arms hanging at her sides, downcast eyes, head bent forward, and pale and speechless.

“She’s a jade!” exclaimed *Marche-à-Terre* in a terrible voice.

When he uttered the word, the pretty hand was placed once more upon his lips, but as he spoke he recoiled fiercely. The little Breton girl no longer saw a lover but a wild beast in all his natural ferocity. The Chouan’s eyebrows were violently drawn together, his lips contracted and he showed his teeth like a dog defending his master.

“I left you a flower and I find you a dung-heap. Ah! why did I leave you?—You have come to betray us, to denounce the Gars!”

These phrases were rather roars than speech. Although Francine was frightened, at the last reproach she ventured to look up at that savage face, raised her angelic eyes to his, and replied calmly:

“I will pledge my salvation that that is false. That is your lady’s idea—”

It was his turn to hang his head; thereupon she took his hand, turned to him with a pretty gesture and said:

“Pierre, why are we in all this trouble? Look you, you may understand something about it, I don’t know how, but I can’t make head or tail of it! But remember that that noble and lovely young lady is my benefactress; she is yours too and we live almost like two sisters. No harm must ever happen to her anywhere, where we are with her, while we are alive, at all events. Give me your oath on that! I have no confidence in anybody here but you.”

“I don’t command here,” replied the Chouan in a surly tone.

Her face darkened. She took his great hanging ears and pinched them gently as if she were caressing a cat.

“Very well,” she said, seeing that his severity had somewhat abated, “promise me that you will use all the power you have to protect our benefactress.”

He shook his head as if he were doubtful of suc-

cess, and the gesture made the girl shudder. At that critical moment, the escort reached the causeway. The measured tread of the soldiers and the clashing of their weapons echoed through the courtyard and seemed to put an end to Marche-à-Terre's indecision.

"I can save her perhaps," he said to his mistress, "if you will make her stay at the house.—And," he added, "whatever happens, stay with her and keep absolutely silent; if you don't do that, don't expect anything!"

"I promise," she replied in her terror.

"All right, go back to the house. Go back at once and hide your fear from everybody, even from your mistress."

"Yes."

She pressed the Chouan's hand, and he looked after her with a paternal air as she ran as lightly as a bird toward the steps; then he glided into the hedge like an actor escaping to the wings just as the curtain rises on the tragedy.

"Do you know, Merle, this place seems to me like a regular rat-trap," said Gérard when they reached the château.

"I believe you," replied the captain thoughtfully.

The two officers lost no time in stationing sentinels to make sure of the causeway and the gate, then they glanced suspiciously at the banks of the pond and the surrounding country.

"Bah!" said Merle, "we must either accept the

hospitality of these barracks in all confidence or not go in at all."

"Let us go in," said Gérard.

The soldiers, relieved from duty by a word from their officer, hastened to place their guns in conical stacks and formed a line around the bed of straw, in the centre of which was the cask of cider. They separated in groups and two peasants began to distribute rye-bread and butter. The marquis came out to greet the officers and escorted them to the salon. When Gérard had mounted the steps and glanced at the two wings over which the aged larches waved their black branches, he called Beau-Pied and Clef-des-Cœurs.

"Go, you two, and reconnoitre the gardens and search the hedges, do you understand? Then you will station a sentinel in front of your line."

"May we light our fire before beginning our hunt, commandant?" said Clef-des-Cœurs.

Gérard bowed.

"Look you, Clef-des-Cœurs," said Beau-Pied, "the adjutant does wrong to investigate this wasp's nest. If Hulot was in command, he'd never have come here; we might as well be in a kettle with the lid on."

"What an idiot you are!" retorted Clef-des-Cœurs; "to think that you, the king of mischief-makers, don't understand that this sentry-box is the château of the amiable lady whom our light-hearted Merle, the most polished of captains, is whistling after, and he'll marry her too, that's as clear as a

well furbished bayonet. She'll do honor to the demi-brigade, will a woman like that."

"True," replied Beau-Pied. "You might add that this is very good cider, but I take no pleasure in drinking it with those beastly hedges staring me in the face. I keep thinking I see Larose and Vieux-Chapeau rolling down into the ditch on La Pèlerine. I shall remember poor Larose's cue all my life, it went up and down like a door-knocker."

"Beau-Pied, my friend, you have too much *imagination* for a soldier; you ought to write ballads at the National Institute."

"I may have too much imagination," retorted Beau-Pied, "but you haven't any at all, and it will be a long while before you'll be a consul."

The laughter of the troop put an end to the discussion, for Clef-des-Cœurs found nothing in his cartridge-case with which to answer his comrade.

"Are you coming to make the round?" asked Beau-Pied. "I'll take the right."

"Then I'll take the left," said the other. "But wait a minute! I want to drink a glass of cider, my wind-pipe's stuck together like the gummed silk round Hulot's best hat."

The left side of the gardens, which Clef-des-Cœurs neglected to explore immediately, was unfortunately the dangerous bank where Francine had noticed the movement of men. In war, everything depends on chance. As he entered the salon and saluted the assembled company, Gérard cast a penetrating glance upon the men who composed it. His



suspicious returned with renewed force, he suddenly walked up to Mademoiselle de Verneuil and said in a low tone :

“I think that we should withdraw at once, we are not safe here.”

“Do you fear anything in my house?” she laughingly replied. “You are safer here than you would be in Mayenne.”

A woman always answers confidently for her lover. The two officers were less disturbed in mind. At that moment the party adjourned to the dining-room, notwithstanding some vague references to an important guest who had not arrived. Mademoiselle de Verneuil, by favor of the silence that always prevails at the beginning of dinner, was able to bestow some attention on the assemblage,—a most interesting one under such circumstances, and of which she was in a certain sense the cause,—as a result of the ignorance with which women accustomed to make sport of everything, approach the most critical periods of life. She suddenly noticed one fact that surprised her. The two Republican officers dominated the whole assemblage by the imposing character of their features. Their long hair, drawn back from the temples and collected in an enormous cue behind the neck, gave additional prominence to those lines on their foreheads that impart such candor and nobility to young faces. Their threadbare blue uniforms with worn red facings—everything, even to the epaulets that had fallen out of place on the march and that betrayed

the lack of cloaks throughout the army, even among the officers, caused the two soldiers to stand out in bold relief from the men among whom they were.

“ Ah ! there is the nation, liberty ! ” she said to herself.

And then, glancing at the Royalists :

“ And there a man, a king, a privileged class ! ”

She could not refrain from admiring Merle’s face, that light-hearted soldier answered so fully one’s ideas of the Frenchmen who could whistle a tune amid the storm of bullets and not forget to make a joke on the comrade who falls beside them. Gérard was imposing. Serious and self-possessed, he seemed to have one of those truly Republican souls which, in those days, were found in great numbers in the French armies, which innumerable instances of devotion, noble but obscure, endowed with an energy hitherto unknown.

“ There’s one of my men with grand views,” said Mademoiselle de Verneuil to herself. “ Supported by the present, which they dominate, they destroy the past, but they do it for the benefit of the future.”

The thought saddened her because it did not relate to her lover, toward whom she turned to take her revenge, in admiration of him, upon the Republic, which she hated already. When she saw the marquis surrounded by men who were bold, fanatical, far-sighted enough to attack a victorious republic in the hope of restoring a dead monarchy, an outlawed

religion, wandering princes and expired privileges, she said to herself :

“ His views are no less grand than the other’s ; for, clinging fast to a mass of ruins, he seeks to construct the future from the past.”

Her mind fed upon images, wavered between the young and the old ruins. Her conscience cried out to her that one was fighting for a man, the other for his country ; but she had reached by way of sentiment the point that others reach by reasoning—that the king is the country.

Hearing a man’s step in the salon, the marquis rose to go and meet him. He recognized the tardy guest, who, astonished at the sight of the company, would have spoken ; but the Gars, unseen by the Republicans, motioned to him to say nothing and take his place at the table. As the two Republican officers scrutinized the faces of their hosts, the suspicions they had at first conceived revived. The ecclesiastical garb of Abbé Gudin and the peculiarity of the Chouan costumes awoke their prudence ; they redoubled their attention therefore and detected a remarkable contrast between the manners of the guests and their speech. The airs assumed by some of them were as aristocratic as the Republicanism manifested by others was exaggerated. Certain glances that they intercepted between the marquis and his guests, certain equivocal remarks imprudently uttered, but above all, the fringe of beard which adorned the necks of some, and was only partially concealed by their cravats, at last convinced

the officers of a truth that struck them both at the same moment. They disclosed their common thoughts to each other by a glance, for Madame du Gua had skilfully separated them and they were reduced to the language of the eyes. Their position required them to act with address : they did not know whether they were masters of the château or had been decoyed into an ambush ; whether Mademoiselle de Verneuil's part in this inexplicable adventure was that of a dupe or an accomplice ; but an unforeseen event precipitated the crisis before they could realize all its gravity.

The new arrival was a man almost as broad as he was long, with florid complexion, one of the men who lean back when they walk, who seem to displace a great quantity of air, and who believe that everybody must needs look more than once to see them. Despite his noble birth, he had taken life as a jest from which one should obtain all that he possibly could ; but, even while kneeling to himself, he was kind, polished and witty after the manner of those gentlemen who, after finishing their education at court, return to their estates and refuse to believe that after twenty years they may have become a little rusty. That sort of man combines with imperturbable self-possession an absolute lack of tact, he says foolish things in a clever way, distrusts what is good with much adroitness, and takes incredible pains to fall into a trap. When, by handling his fork in a way that denoted a great eater, he had made up what time he had lost, he cast his eyes over the as-

sembled company. His astonishment redoubled when he saw the two officers, and he questioned Madame du Gua with a glance ; her only reply was to point to Mademoiselle de Verneuil. On perceiving the siren, whose beauty was beginning to impose silence on the feelings at first aroused by Madame du Gua in the minds of the guests, the stout stranger indulged in one of those insolent, mocking smiles which seem to contain an entire salacious history. He placed his lips to his neighbor's ear and whispered two or three words, and those words, which remained a secret to Marie and the two officers, travelled from ear to ear, from mouth to mouth, even to the heart of him whom they were calculated to wound to the death. The leaders of the Vendéans and Chouans turned their eyes upon the Marquis de Montauran with cruel curiosity. Madame du Gua's eyes wandered from the marquis to the astonished Mademoiselle de Verneuil, emitting flashes of joy. The officers anxiously exchanged glances, awaiting the result of the strange scene. In an instant the forks remained inactive in every hand, silence reigned in the room, and all eyes were fixed on the Gars. A cloud of rage swept over that flushed, indignant face, which became like wax. The young chieftain turned to the guest from whom the blast had come, and said, in a voice that seemed shrouded in *crêpe* :

“Death of my soul ! is that true, count ?”

“Upon my honor,” replied the count, bowing gravely.

The marquis lowered his eyes a moment, but soon

raised them to look at Marie, who, following the discussion attentively, received that death-laden glance.

"I would give my life," he muttered, "to take my revenge instantly."

Madame du Gua understood his words simply from the movement of his lips, and smiled at the young man as one smiles at a friend whose despair will soon be at an end. The general contempt for Mademoiselle de Verneuil, depicted on every face, aroused the indignation of the two Republicans to the highest pitch, and they rose abruptly from their seats.

"What do you wish, citizens?" inquired Madame du Gua.

"Our swords, *citizeness*," replied Gérard ironically.

"You don't need them at table," said the marquis coldly.

"No; but we are going to play a game that you are familiar with," said Gérard, returning. "We shall be at somewhat closer quarters here than at La Pèlerine."

The whole company seemed stupefied with amazement. At that moment, a discharge that sounded ominously in the ears of the two officers, rang out in the courtyard. They rushed out upon the stoop; there they saw about a hundred Chouans taking aim at the few soldiers who had survived their first discharge, and firing on them like hares. The Bretons came from the bank where Marche-à-Terre had

stationed them at the risk of their lives ; for, after the last reports, they heard, amid the shrieks of the dying, some of the Chouans falling into the water like stones into a chasm. Pille-Miche covered Gérard, Marche-à-Terre did the like for Merle.

“ Captain,” said the marquis coldly to Merle, repeating the words the Republican had spoken of him, “ *men, you see, are like medlars, they ripen on the straw.* ”

And he waved his hand to where the entire escort of Blues lay on the blood-drenched straw, where the Chouans were despatching the living and rifling the dead with incredible rapidity.

“ I was quite right when I said that your men would not go as far as La Pèlerine,” added the marquis. “ I fancy too that your head will be filled with lead before mine, what do you think ? ”

Montauran felt a horrible craving to satisfy his rage. His irony to the vanquished, the ferocity, the perfidy of that military execution, performed without orders, but which he then avowed, met the secret wishes of his heart. In his frenzy, he would have liked to annihilate France. The murdered Blues, the two living officers, one and all innocent of the crime for which he was seeking vengeance, were in his hands like the cards a gambler destroys in his desperation.

“ I would rather die thus than enjoy such a triumph as yours,” said Gérard.

As his eyes fell upon his naked, bleeding soldiers, he cried :

“Murdered by cowards in cold blood!”

“As Louis XVI. was, monsieur,” retorted the marquis, warmly.

“Monsieur,” rejoined Gérard haughtily, “there are mysteries which you will never understand in proceedings against a king.”

“Accuse the king!” cried the marquis in a frenzy.

“Fight against France!” retorted Gérard in a contemptuous tone.

“Idiocy!” said the marquis.

“Parricide!” said the Republican.

“Regicide!”

“Well, well, do you propose to take the moment of your death to quarrel?” cried Merle gayly.

“True,” said Gérard coolly, turning to the marquis. “Monsieur, if it is your intention to put us to death,” he added, “at least do us the favor to shoot us on the spot.”

“That’s like you!” said the captain; “always in a hurry to have done. But, my friend, when one is going a long distance and may have no breakfast the next day, it is customary to eat a hearty supper.”

Gérard, without a word, walked proudly to the wall; Pille-Miche took aim at him, then, glancing at the motionless marquis, took his leader’s silence for a command, and the adjutant-major fell like a log. Marche-à-Terre ran up to divide this fresh booty with Pille-Miche. Like two half-starved crows, they disputed and grumbled over the still warm body.



“If you care to finish your supper, captain, you are at liberty to come with me,” said the marquis to Merle, whom he wished to keep with a view to possible exchanges.

The captain mechanically returned with his host, saying in an undertone as if reproaching himself :

“It’s that devilish hussy who’s at the bottom of this. What will Hulot say ?”

“That hussy !” exclaimed the marquis in a hollow voice. “But is she really a hussy ?”

The captain seemed to have dealt Montauran a death-blow, for he followed him, staggering as he walked, pale, downcast and gloomy. Meanwhile in the dining-room another scene had been enacted, which took on so ominous an aspect on account of the marquis’s absence, that Marie, finding herself without her protector, was justified in fearing the execution of the death sentence written in her rival’s eyes. At the time of the discharge of musketry, all the guests had risen except Madame du Gua.

“Sit down,” she said, “it’s nothing, only our people shooting the Blues.”

When she saw that the marquis had left the room, she rose.

“Mademoiselle here,” she cried with the calmness of smothered fury, “has come to take away the Gars ! She has come to try to betray him to the Republic.”

“Since this morning I might have denounced him twenty times, and I saved his life,” replied Mademoiselle de Verneuil.

Madame du Gua rushed upon her rival with the rapidity of lightning ; in her blind frenzy she tore away the slender frogs of the girl's spencer,—she was taken by surprise by the sudden attack—violated with rude hands the sanctuary where the letter was concealed, tore her way through dress, embroidery, corset, chemise ; then she took advantage of the opportunity to glut her jealousy, and attacked her rival's heaving bosom with such address and ferocity that she left the bleeding marks of her nails upon it, experiencing a sombre joy in forcing her to undergo the hateful humiliation. In the feeble struggle that Marie made against the furious creature, her cloak fell off, her hair broke its bonds and fell in waving locks ; her face glowed with shame and two tears made a moist, burning line down her cheeks and made the fire in her eyes burn brighter ; the agitation of shame exposed her shuddering form to the gaze of the guests. Even the most hardened judges would have believed in her innocence when they witnessed her grief.

Hatred errs so in its calculations, that Madame du Gua did not notice that nobody listened to her when she cried in triumph :

“Look, messieurs, and see if I have slandered this horrible creature !”

“Not so horrible,” muttered the stout guest who had caused the catastrophe. “For my own part, I am prodigiously fond of such horrors !”

“Here,” continued the pitiless Vendean, “is an order signed Laplace and countersigned Dubois.”

At those names, some of the guests raised their heads.

“And this is its tenor,” continued Madame du Gua :

“Citizen commanders of all ranks, administrators of districts, procureurs-syndics, etc., in the revolted departments, and particularly in those localities where the *ci-devant* Marquis de Montauran, leader of brigands and known by the name of the Gars, may be found, will give support and assistance to Citizeness Marie Verneuil and conform to such orders as she may give them, each citizen within the line of his duty, etc.”

“A girl from the Opéra to take an illustrious name to stain it with such infamy !” she added.

A movement of surprise was visible throughout the assemblage.

“The game is not even, if the Republic employs such pretty women against us !” said the Baron du Guénic jocosely.

“Especially girls who have nothing at stake,” added Madame du Gua.

“Nothing ?” said the Chevalier du Vissard ; “why, mademoiselle has an estate which must bring her in a very large income !”

“The Republic must be fond of a joke, to send us prostitutes as ambassadors, eh ?” cried Abbé Gudín.

“But mademoiselle unfortunately seeks pleasures that kill,” said Madame du Gua, with a fiendish expression of joy which indicated that the jesting was drawing near its end.

“How is it then that you are still alive, madame?” said Marie, rising after she had repaired the disorder of her toilet.

That murderous epigram compelled something like respect for so undaunted a victim, and imposed silence on the company. Madame du Gua saw upon the lips of the insurgent leaders an ironical smile that drove her mad, and without noticing the arrival of the marquis and the captain, she cried, pointing to Mademoiselle de Verneuil :

“Pille-Miche, take her away ; she is my part of the plunder and I give her to you ; do whatever you please with her.”

As the words *whatever you please* fell from her lips, the whole assemblage shuddered, for the hideous faces of Pille-Miche and Marche-à-Terre appeared behind the marquis, and the punishment in store for her was made manifest in all its horror.

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Francine stood, with clasped hands and eyes filled with tears, as if struck by lightning. Mademoiselle de Verneuil, recovering all her presence of mind in the face of danger, cast a scornful glance upon the company, seized the letter which Madame du Gua still held, raised her head, and with dry eyes flashing fire, rushed toward the door, where Merle had left his sword. There she met the marquis, cold and immovable as a statue. Nothing pleaded in her behalf on that face, whose every feature was stern and unyielding. Wounded to the heart, life became hateful to her. The man who had manifested so deep an affection for her had heard the mocking jests with which she had been assailed, and had been a horror-stricken witness of the indignity she had been forced to endure when the charms that a woman reserves for the eyes of love were laid bare to the gaze of all ! Perhaps she would have forgiven Montauran his feeling of contempt, but she was indignant because he had seen her in an infamous situation ; she gazed at him in a bewildered way, but with eyes filled with hate, for she already felt a terrible craving for revenge springing up in her heart. Seeing

death behind her, her powerlessness choked her. Her brain whirled as if she were going mad ; there-upon, instead of killing herself, she seized the sword, brandished it over the marquis's head and buried it in his body up to the hilt ; but as the blade passed between his arm and his side, the Gars caught Marie by the wrist and dragged her from the room, assisted by Pille-Miche, who threw himself on the wild creature just as she tried to kill the marquis. At that spectacle, Francine uttered a piercing shriek.

" Pierre ! Pierre ! Pierre ! " she cried in piteous tones.

And, still shrieking, she followed her mistress.

The marquis left the stupefied assemblage and went out, closing the door of the dining-room. When he came out upon the stoop, his hand still grasped the young woman's wrist, pressing it convulsively, while Pille-Miche's nervous fingers almost broke the bones of her arm ; but she felt only the burning hand of the young leader, at whom she gazed coldly.

" Monsieur, you hurt me ! "

The marquis made no reply except to look his mistress in the face for a moment.

" Pray, have you some grievance for which you intend to take a base revenge as that woman did ? " she asked.

At that moment she caught sight of the dead bodies lying on the straw, and cried with a shudder :

" The word of a gentleman ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! "

After that ghastly laugh, she added :

" What a beautiful day ! "

“Yes, beautiful,” he repeated, “and without a morrow.”

He dropped her hand after one last, long glance at the fascinating creature, whom it was almost impossible for him to renounce. Neither of those two haughty spirits would bend. Perhaps the marquis expected a tear; but the girl’s eyes remained dry and proud. He turned hastily away, leaving to Pille-Miche his victim.

“God will hear me, marquis; I will pray to Him that you may have a beautiful day without a morrow!”

Pille-Miche, embarrassed by such magnificent prey, led her away with gentleness, mingled with ironical respect.

The marquis sighed, returned to the dining-room and confronted his guests with a face like that of a dead man whose eyes have not been closed.

Captain Merle’s presence was inexplicable to the actors in this tragedy, and they all gazed at him in surprise, questioning one another with their eyes.

Merle noticed the Chouans’ amazement, and without belying his nature, he said to them with a sad smile:

“I cannot think, messieurs, that you would refuse a glass of wine to a man who is on the last stage of his journey.”

It was just as these words, uttered with true French recklessness well adapted to please the Vendéans, had calmed the excitement of the guests,

that Montauran appeared, and his pale face, his staring eyes froze the blood in their veins.

"You see," said the captain, "that death draws the living in its train!"

"Ah! there you are, my dear council of war!" said the marquis, with the gesture of a man awaking from sleep.

He held out a bottle of Vin de Grave to the captain, as if to fill his glass.

"Oh! thanks, citizen marquis, I might lose my head, you see—"

At that sally, Madame du Gua said to the guests with a smile :

"Come, let us spare him the dessert."

"You are very cruel in your vengeance, madame," rejoined the captain. "You forget my murdered friend who is waiting for me, and I never fail to keep my appointments."

"Captain," said the marquis, tossing him his glove, "you are free! See, here's your passport. The King's Chasseurs are well aware that all the game should not be killed."

"Life it is then!" replied Merle; "but you are wrong; I answer by playing a square game with you, I will never give you quarter. You may be very clever but you're not the equal of Gérard. Although your head can never pay for his, I must have it and I will have it."

"He was in a great hurry!" retorted the marquis.

"Adieu!—I can drink with my executioners, but



I will not remain with my friend's murderers," said the captain, and he disappeared, leaving the guests profoundly astonished.

"Well, messieurs, what say you to the sheriffs, doctors and lawyers who manage the Republic?" queried the Gars coldly.

"*Par la mort-Dieu!* marquis," replied the Comte de Bauvan, "they're very ill-bred at all events. That fellow was decidedly impertinent to us, in my opinion."

The captain had a secret motive in his abrupt departure. The despised, humiliated creature, who was perhaps yielding to her tormentors at that moment, had exhibited in the recent scene, charms so difficult to forget that he said to himself as he was leaving the house :

"If she's a strumpet, she's no ordinary strumpet, and I would certainly marry her."

He was so confident of rescuing her from the hands of the savages, that his first thought, when assured of his own safety, was that he would take her under his protection thenceforth. Unfortunately when he reached the stoop, he found the courtyard deserted. He looked all about, listened in the silence and heard nothing but the noisy distant laughter of the Chouans, who were drinking in the gardens and dividing their booty. He ventured to skirt the fatal wing in front of which his soldiers had been shot; and from that corner, by the faint light of a few candles, he distinguished the different groups formed by the King's Chasseurs. Neither Pille-Miche, nor Marche-à-Terre,

nor the young woman was there; but at that moment he felt a gentle twitch at the skirt of his coat, turned and saw Francine on her knees.

"Where is she?" he asked.

"I don't know—Pierre drove me back and ordered me not to stir."

"Which way did they go?"

"That way," she replied, pointing to the causeway.

They could see in that direction shadows cast by the moon on the waters of the lake, and recognized the outlines of a woman, outlines so graceful, although indistinct, that they made their hearts beat. "Oh! there she is," said the peasant girl.

Mademoiselle de Verneuil seemed to be standing, resigned to her fate, among several other figures whose gestures indicated that a discussion was in progress.

"There are several of them!" cried the captain.

"Never mind, forward!"

"You will be killed to no purpose," said Francine.

"I have died once to-day already," he replied gayly.

They walked together toward the dark gateway beyond which the scene was taking place. Half-way to the gate Francine stopped.

"No," she said softly, "I won't go any farther. Pierre told me not to meddle; I know him and we shall spoil everything. Do what you please, Monsieur l'Officier, but move away from me. If Pierre should see you with me, he'd kill you."

At that moment Pille-Miche appeared outside the gate, called the postilion, who had remained in the stable, spied the captain and covered him with his musket, crying :

“ Sainte Anne d’Auray ! the priest of Antrain was right when he said that the Blues make compacts with the devil. Wait, wait, I’m going to bring you to life again ! ”

“ What ! my life is spared,” cried Merle, when he saw that he was threatened. “ Here’s your leader’s glove.”

“ Yes, that’s ghosts sure,” retorted the Chouan. “ I don’t spare your life—*Ave Maria* ! ”

He fired. The bullet entered the captain’s head and he fell.

When Francine approached him, she heard him say indistinctly :

“ I would much rather stay here with them than return to the command without them.”

The Chouan pounced upon the Blue to strip him, saying :

“ There’s one good thing about such ghosts as this, they come back with their clothes on.”

When he found the Gars’s glove in the hand of the captain, who had attempted to show him that sacred safeguard, he was thunderstruck.

“ I wouldn’t like to be in my mother’s son’s skin ! ” he cried.

Then he disappeared as swiftly as a bird.

To understand this meeting that resulted so fatally for the captain, it is necessary to follow Mademoi-

selle de Verneuil when the marquis, a prey to rage and despair, turned his back upon her and abandoned her to Pille-Miche. Francine thereupon seized Marche-à-Terre's arm convulsively, and with tears in her eyes demanded the fulfilment of the promise he had given her. A few steps away, Pille-Miche was dragging his victim along as if he had some heavy burden in tow. Marie, with her hair flying in the wind and her head thrown back, cast her eyes toward the lake ; but, being held in a grasp of steel, she was forced slowly to follow the Chouan, who turned several times to look at her or to make her walk faster, and each time a jovial thought brought a frightful smile to his face.

" Ain't she *godaine* ! " he cried with coarse emphasis.

Hearing those words, Francine recovered the power of speech.

" Pierre ! "

" Well ? "

" Is he going to kill mademoiselle ? "

" Not right away," replied Marche-à-Terre.

" But she won't let him touch her, and if she dies, I shall die ! "

" Ah, so ! you love her too much ; let her die ! " said Marche-à-Terre.

" If we are rich and happy, we owe our happiness to her ; but what of that,—didn't you promise to save her from any harm ? "

" I'll go and try ; but stay here, don't stir."

Marche-à-Terre's arm was instantly released, and

Francine, a prey to the most horrible anxiety, waited in the courtyard. Marche-à-Terre overtook his comrade just as the latter, after dragging his victim into the barn, had forced her to enter the carriage. Pille-Miche called upon his comrade to assist him in drawing out the calèche.

"What are you going to do with all that?" queried Marche-à-Terre.

"*Ben!* the *grande garce* gave me the woman and what's hers is mine."

"All right for the coach, you can make a sou or two on it; but the woman? she'll fly at your face like a cat!"

Pille-Miche laughed uproariously as he replied:

"*Quien*, I take her home too; I'll tie her."

"All right, let's harness the horses," said Marche-à-Terre.

A moment later Marche-à-Terre, having left his comrade watching his prey, pulled the calèche through the gate on to the causeway, and Pille-Miche took his seat beside Mademoiselle de Verneuil, not noticing that she was making ready to spring and throw herself into the pond.

"Ho! Pille-Miche," cried Marche-à-Terre.

"What?"

"I'll buy all your plunder."

"Joking?" queried the Chouan, pulling his prisoner by the skirts as a butcher would hold a calf that was trying to escape.

"Let me see her and I'll give you a price."

The poor girl was obliged to alight and stood be-

tween the two Chouans, each of whom held one of her hands, gazing at her as the two old men must have gazed at Suzanne in her bath.

“Would you like thirty good francs a year?” said Marche-à-Terre with a sigh.

“Honor bright?”

“Agreed?” said Marche-à-Terre, offering his hand.

“Oh! I agree; I can have Breton girls with that, and *godaines* too!—But the carriage, who gets the carriage?” continued Pille-Miche on second thought.

“I do!” cried Marche-à-Terre, in a voice of thunder, which denoted the sort of superiority over all his companions that his ferocious nature gave him.

“But suppose there’s gold in it?”

“Didn’t you agree?”

“Yes, I agreed.”

“Well, go and bring the postilion, who’s tied up in the stable.”

“But suppose there’s gold in the—”

“Is there any?” Marche-à-Terre suddenly demanded of Marie, shaking her by the arm.

“I have about three hundred francs,” she replied.

At that, the Chouans exchanged glances.

“Well, my good friend, let’s not fight over a Blue,” said Pille-Miche in Marche-à-Terre’s ear;

• “let’s pitch her into the pond with a stone round her neck and divide the three hundred francs.”

“I’ll give you the three hundred francs out of my

share of D'Orgemont's ransom!" cried Marche-à-Terre, stifling a groan extorted by the sacrifice.

Pille-Miche uttered a sort of hoarse cry and went to fetch the postilion. His joy brought disaster to the captain whom he chanced to meet. When he heard the report, Marche-à-Terre hurried to the spot where Francine, still shivering with fear, was praying on her knees, with clasped hands, beside the poor captain's body, the spectacle of a genuine murder had caused her such a cruel shock.

"Run to your mistress," said the Chouan abruptly, "she is saved!"

He ran himself to fetch the postilion, returned with the rapidity of a lightning flash, and as he passed Merle's body again, he noticed the Gars's glove still convulsively clutched in his hand.

"Qho!" he cried, "Pille-Miche did a treacherous thing that time! he isn't sure of living to enjoy his income."

He snatched away the glove and said to Made-moiselle de Verneuil, who was already sitting in the calèche with Francine:

"Here, take this glove. If any men attack you on the road, cry out: *Oh! le Gars!* show this passport and no harm will happen to you.—Francine," he said, turning to her and seizing her hand in his strong grasp, "we are quits with this woman; come with me and let the devil take her."

"You want me to desert her at such a time as this!" replied Francine in a sorrowful tone.

Marche-à-Terre scratched his ear and his fore-

head ; then he raised his head and showed his eyes in which there was a fierce gleam.

"All right," he said. "I leave you with her a week ; if, at the end of that time, you don't come with me—"

He did not finish the sentence, but struck the barrel of his carbine a violent blow with the flat of his hand. Having gone through the motion of taking aim at his mistress, he disappeared without waiting for a reply.

As soon as the Chouan had gone, a hollow voice that seemed to come from the pond cried :

"Madame ! madame !"

The postilion and the two women shuddered with horror, for several bodies had floated to that point. A Blue, who was hidden behind a tree, emerged from his place of concealment.

"Let me get up behind your van, or I'm a dead man ! That damned glass of cider Clef-des-Cœurs wanted to drink cost more than one pint of blood ! If he'd followed my example and made his round, our poor comrades wouldn't be floating there like skiffs."

While these events were taking place outside the château, the leaders from La Vendée and the leaders of the Chouans were holding council, glass in hand, under the presidency of the Marquis de Montauran. Frequent libations of Bordeaux gave life to the discussion, which became grave and momentous toward the close of the banquet. At dessert, as soon as the common plan of military operations was deter-



mined upon, the Royalists drank the health of the Bourbons. At that moment, the report of Pille-Miche's musket rang out like an echo of the disastrous war that those jovial and nobly born conspirators proposed to wage upon the Republic. Madame du Gua started; at that movement, caused by the pleasure of knowing that she was rid of her rival, the guests looked at one another in silence, while the marquis rose from the table and left the room.

"He did love her though!" said Madame du Gua ironically. "Go and keep him company, Monsieur de Fontaine; he'll be as tiresome as the flies, if we leave him with his black thoughts."

She went to the window looking on the courtyard to try and discover Marie's body. From there she could make out, by the last rays of the moon, the calèche driving along the avenue of apple trees with incredible celerity, Mademoiselle de Verneuil's shawl was fluttering in the wind outside of the vehicle. At that sight Madame du Gua, in a furious rage, left the party.

The marquis, leaning against the rail on the stoop, absorbed in gloomy meditation, was looking at about a hundred and fifty Chouans, who, having divided their plunder in the garden, had returned to finish the cask of cider and the bread promised to the Blues. These soldiers, of a new type, upon whom the hopes of the monarchy were founded, were drinking in groups, while seven or eight of them stood on the bank opposite the main entrance, amusing themselves by throwing into the water the

bodies of the Blues, to which they tied heavy stones. That spectacle, combined with the diverse pictures presented by the strange costumes and fierce expressions of the reckless, barbarous gars, was so novel and so extraordinary to Monsieur de Fontaine, accustomed as he was to the Vendean troops, in whose appearance there was something of nobility and regularity, that he seized the opportunity to say to the Marquis de Montauran :

“What do you hope to be able to do with such beasts?”

“Not much, eh, my dear count?” replied the Gars.

“Will they ever learn how to manœuvre in presence of the Republicans?”

“Never.”

“Will they ever be able even to understand and carry out your orders?”

“Never.”

“What will they ever be good for to you, then?”

“To plunge my sword into the entrails of the Republic!” replied the marquis in a voice of thunder; “to give me Fougères in three days and all Bretagne in ten!—Go, monsieur,” he said in a milder tone, “go back to La Vendée; only let D’Autichamp, Suzannet, Abbé Bernier march as rapidly as I do; let them not treat with the First Consul, as I have been led to fear they might do—” at that point he grasped the Vendean’s hand and pressed it—“then we shall be within thirty leagues of Paris in three weeks.”

“ But the Republic is sending sixty thousand men and General Brune against us.”

“ Sixty thousand men ! indeed ? ” rejoined the marquis with a mocking laugh. “ And with what will General Bonaparte make the Italian campaign ? As for General Brune, he won’t come, Bonaparte has sent him against the English in Holland, and General Hédouville, the friend of our friend Barras, takes his place here. Do you understand me ? ”

Hearing him speak thus, Monsieur de Fontaine looked at the Marquis de Montauran with a shrewd, cunning air which seemed to reproach him for not himself understanding the mysterious words that were addressed to him. Thereupon the two gentlemen understood each other perfectly ; but the young leader replied with an indefinable smile to the thoughts they expressed with their eyes :

“ Monsieur de Fontaine, do you know my coat of arms ? My motto is : *Persevere until death.* ”

The Comte de Fontaine took Montauran’s hand and pressed it, saying :

“ I have been left for dead at Quatre-Chemins, so you cannot doubt me ; but trust my experience, times have changed—”

“ Oh ! yes,” said La Billardière, joining them. “ You are young, marquis ! Listen to me ; your property hasn’t all been sold—”

“ Ah ! try to conceive of devotion without sacrifice ! ” said Montauran.

“ Do you know the king well ? ” said La Billardière.

“Yes.”

“I admire you.”

“The king,” replied the young leader, “is the priest, and I fight for the faith !”

They separated, the Vendean convinced of the necessity of resigning himself to events as they came, keeping his faith warm in his heart, La Billardière to return to England, Montauran to fight desperately, and, by the triumphs of which he dreamed, to compel the Vendéans to coöperate in his undertaking.

These events had aroused such intense emotion in Mademoiselle de Verneuil’s soul, that she lay back in the carriage, utterly prostrated and like a dead woman, after giving the order to drive to Fougères. Francine was as silent as her mistress. The postilion, fearing some new adventure, made haste to reach the high road and they soon arrived at the summit of La Pèlerine.

In the dense, grayish mist of the morning, Marie de Verneuil crossed the broad lovely valley of Couësson, in which this narrative opened, and she could scarcely make out, from the top of La Pèlerine, the schistose cliff upon which Fougères is built. The travellers were still about two leagues from the town. As she was suffering intensely from cold herself, Mademoiselle de Verneuil thought of the poor soldier who was riding behind the carriage, and insisted, despite his refusal, that he should take a seat inside, beside Francine. The sight of Fougères diverted her mind for one moment from her

reflections. Furthermore, as the guard stationed at Porte Saint-Léonard refused to admit strangers to the town, she was obliged to exhibit her letter from the ministry; she fancied herself safe from any hostile undertaking when she had entered that fortified place, whose inhabitants were, at the moment, its only defenders. The postilion could find no shelter anywhere except at the Hôtel de la *Poste*.

"Madame," said the Blue whose life she had saved, "if you ever want a little work with the sabre done on any man, my life is at your service. I am good at that. My name is Jean Falcon, otherwise called Beau-Pied, sergeant in the first company of Hulot's *lapins*, seventy-second demi-brigade, nicknamed *La Mayençaise*. Excuse my presumption and my vanity; but I can offer you only a sergeant's heart; I have only that at your service, at this moment."

He turned on his heel and walked away whistling.

"The lower we go in the social scale, the more generous sentiments we find, generous without ostentation," said Marie bitterly. "A marquis gives me death for life, and a sergeant—But, let us say no more about it."

When the fair Parisian was safely bestowed in a well-warmed bed, her faithful Francine waited in vain for the affectionate word to which she was accustomed; but, when she saw her standing anxiously by her bedside, her mistress moved her head with a sad smile.

“They call this a day, Francine,” she said, “I am ten years older!”

The next morning, when Marie had arisen, Corentin made his appearance, and upon asking to see her, was admitted.

“Francine,” she said, “something terrible must have happened to me, for the sight of Corentin will not be altogether distasteful to me.”

Nevertheless, when she saw the man, she was conscious for the thousandth time of an instinctive repugnance, which an acquaintance of two years had not allayed.

“Well, well,” he said, smiling, “I thought we had been successful. So he wasn’t the man after all?”

“Corentin,” she replied, as an expression of pain stole slowly over her face, “don’t mention that affair to me until I mention it myself.”

The fellow walked up and down the room, glancing obliquely at Mademoiselle de Verneuil and trying to divine the secret thoughts of that strange girl, whose glance was keen enough to disconcert the cleverest men at times.

“I have provided for this set-back,” he rejoined after a moment’s silence. “I have already made inquiries, thinking that you might wish to make your headquarters in this town. We are at the very heart of the Chouan uprising. Do you wish to stay here?”

She answered with an affirmative nod, which caused Corentin to form conjectures, in part true, as to the events of the preceding night.

“ I have hired for you an unsold house belonging to the nation. They are a long way behind the times in this province. No one dares purchase the barrack, because it belonged to an *émigré*, who has the reputation of a brute. It is near Saint-Léonard Church, and, on my word of honor, there’s an enchanting view from it. You can have the kennel, if you wish ; it’s inhabitable ; will you come and look at it ? ”

“ Instantly,” she cried.

“ But I must have a few hours more to have it cleaned and put to rights, so that you may find everything to your liking.”

“ What does it matter ? ” she said, “ I would willingly live in a cloister or a prison. However, arrange so that I can rest there to-night in absolute solitude. Go, leave me. Your presence is unendurable to me. I wish to be alone with Francine, I shall be more contented with her than with myself perhaps. Adieu. Go ! go, I say ! ”

These words, uttered volubly, and instinct with coquetry, with despotism, with passion in turn, denoted in her case perfect tranquillity of mind. Doubtless, sleep had slowly driven away the impressions of the preceding day, and reflection had counselled vengeance. If now and then a sombre expression passed across her face, it seemed to bear witness to the faculty certain women possess of burying the most exalted sentiments in their hearts, and to the dissimulation that enables them to smile sweetly while scheming the destruction of their

victim. Her mind was full of plans for getting the marquis into her hands, alive. For the first time, she had lived as she wished to live ; but of that life, only a single sentiment remained, the thirst for vengeance, for complete, boundless vengeance. That was her only thought, her only passion. Francine's words and attentions found Marie dumb, she seemed to be sleeping with her eyes open ; and the long day passed without a movement or act to indicate the external life that bears witness to our thoughts. She lay all day upon a couch she had made of chairs and pillows. In the evening, however, she let fall these words, looking at Francine :

“ My child, I learned yesterday that one lives to love, and I realize to-day that one may die to be revenged. Yes, to go and find him wherever he is, to meet him once more, to fascinate him and have him for my own, I would give my life ! But if, within a few days, I do not have him under my feet, humble and submissive—this man who has treated me with contempt—if I do not make him my valet, why I shall be beneath contempt, I shall no longer be a woman, I shall no longer be myself ! ”

The house Corentin had proposed to Mademoiselle de Verneuil offered sufficient resources to satisfy her innate taste for elegance and luxury ; he collected everything that he knew was likely to please her, with the zeal of a lover working for his mistress, or, better still, with the servility of a powerful man seeking to win the favor of some weaker vessel of whom he has need. The next day he came and



suggested that Mademoiselle de Verneuil should visit that improvised abode.

Although she did no more than pass from her wretched couch to an antique sofa that Corentin had found for her, the eccentric Parisian took possession of the house as of a thing that belonged to her. She exhibited a queenly indifference for everything she saw there, followed by a sudden attachment to the most trifling articles, which she appropriated all at once as if they had long been familiar to her : commonplace details, but not unimportant in describing such exceptional characters. It seemed as if a dream had already familiarized her with that place of abode, where she lived with her hatred as she would have lived there with her love.

“ At all events,” she said to herself, “ I have not caused him to feel that insulting compassion that kills one, I do not owe my life to him. O my first and last and only love, what an ending ! ”

She pounced upon the startled Francine.

“ Are you in love ? Oh ! yes, you are in love, I remember. Ah ! I am very fortunate to have with me a woman who understands me. My poor Francine, doesn't man seem to you a frightful creature ? *Hein !* he said that he loved me and he did not resist the slightest test of his love. But if the whole world had spurned him, my heart would have been a safe refuge for him ; if the universe had accused him, I would have defended him ! Formerly the world was filled with men and women who went and came and were simply indifferent to me ; the

world was sad but not horrible ; but now, what is the world without him ? He is to live on and I am not to be beside him, I am not to see him, speak to him, feel him, hold him, embrace him. Ah ! rather would I kill him myself in his sleep ! ”

Francine, in dismay, gazed at her a moment in silence.

“ Kill the man you love ? ” she said in a soft voice.

“ Yes, to be sure, when he no longer loves me. ”

But, after those terrible words, she hid her face in her hands, resumed her seat and said no more.

The next morning, a man appeared unceremoniously in her apartment, unannounced. His face was stern. It was Hulot. Corentin accompanied him. She raised her eyes and shuddered.

“ You have come, ” she said, “ to ask about your friends ? They are dead. ”

“ I know it, ” replied Hulot. “ They did not die in the service of the Republic ! ”

“ For me and by my means, ” she rejoined. “ You talk to me of the country ! Does the country restore life to those who die for her ? does she so much as avenge them ? But I will avenge them ! ” she cried.

As the ghastly image of the catastrophe whose victim she had been, suddenly stood forth before her imagination, that lovely creature, who placed modesty first among the artifices of woman, seemed for the moment to have gone mad. She walked with a quick, jerky gait to where the stupefied commandant stood.

“For a few murdered soldiers, I will bring to the axe of your scaffolds a head that is worth thousands of heads!” she exclaimed. “Women rarely make war, but, old as you are, you can learn some useful ruses in my school. I will hand over a whole family to your bayonets! his ancestors and himself, his future and his past. I will be as perfidious and false to him as I have been kind and true. Yes, commandant, I propose to lure that little nobleman into my bed, and he shall leave it to go to his death. You see, I will not endure a rival. The wretch pronounced his sentence upon me: *a day without a morrow!* Your Republic and I will both have our revenge.—The Republic!” she continued, in a voice whose extraordinary intonations terrified Hulot; “but in that case the rebel will die for having borne arms against his country, will he not? In that case France would rob me of my vengeance? Ah! what a small thing life is, when one death expiates but one crime! But, although that gentleman has but one head to lose, I shall have one night to make him think he is losing more than one life. Above all things, commandant, do you, who will kill him”—she sighed heavily—“see to it that nothing betrays my treachery, and that he dies convinced of my fidelity, I ask nothing but that of you. Let him see only myself, myself and my caresses!”

With that she held her peace; but, through the purple flush upon her face, Hulot and Corentin saw that the sentiment of modesty was not entirely stifled by anger and excitement. Marie shivered

violently as she said the last words ; she seemed to listen for them again as if she doubted whether she had uttered them, and started innocently with the involuntary gesture of a woman whose veil is falling.

“ But you have had him in your hands ! ” said Corentin.

“ Probably, ” she replied in a bitter tone.

“ Why did you stop me when I had my hands on him ? ” demanded Hulot.

“ Why, commandant, we didn’t know that it was *he*. ”

Suddenly the excited creature, who was striding rapidly back and forth, with devouring glances at the two spectators of the storm, became perfectly calm.

“ I don’t know myself, ” she said in a man’s voice.

“ Why do we talk ? we must go and find him ! ”

“ Go and find him ? ” said Hulot. “ Why, my dear child, you must be careful ; we are not masters of the fields, and if you should venture out of the town, you would be taken or shot within a hundred yards. ”

“ There is never any danger for those who seek revenge ! ” she replied, waving her hand disdainfully to dismiss the two men, whom she was ashamed to look in the face.

“ What a woman ! ” cried Hulot, as he withdrew with Corentin. “ What an idea it was of the police authorities in Paris ! But she’ll never give him up to us, ” he added, shaking his head.

“ Oh ! yes, ” said Corentin.

“Don’t you see that she loves him?” asked Hulot.

“That’s the very reason. Besides,” said Corentin, glancing at the astonished commandant, “I am here to prevent her doing foolish things; for, in my judgment, comrade, there’s no love that is worth three hundred thousand francs.”

When the diplomat of the Interior Department left the soldier, the latter followed him with his eyes; and when he could no longer hear the sound of his footsteps, he sighed, saying to himself:

“I wonder if it isn’t an advantage sometimes to be an old fool like myself? *Tonnerre de Dieu!* if I fall in with the Gars, we will fight hand to hand, or my name’s not Hulot; for, if yonder fox should bring me to book, now that they have created courts martial, I should deem my conscience as foul as the shirt of a young trooper when he’s under fire for the first time.”

The massacre of La Vivetière and the desire to avenge his two friends had influenced Hulot as powerfully to resume the command of his demi-brigade, as the reply of the new minister, Berthier, to the effect that his resignation would not be accepted under existing circumstances. With the ministerial despatch was sent a confidential letter in which, without informing him what Mademoiselle de Verneuil’s mission was, he wrote him that it was entirely distinct from the war itself, and was not to interfere with the military operations. The participation of the military officers in that affair was

limited, he said, to assisting *that honorable citizeness if occasion should arise*. Learning from current rumors that the movements of the Chouans indicated a concentration of their forces in the neighborhood of Fougères, Hulot had secretly led two battalions of his demi-brigade to that important post by a forced march. The country's danger, his hatred of the aristocracy, whose partisans were threatening a considerable extent of country, and his grief at the loss of his friends had all contributed to rekindle in the old soldier's breast the fire of his youth.

"And this is the life I longed for!" cried Made-moiselle de Verneuil when she was alone with Francine; "however swiftly the hours fly, they are to me like centuries of thinking."

She seized Francine's hand abruptly, and her voice, like that of the first redbreast that sings after the tempest, slowly uttered these words:

"It's of no use, my child, I see always before me those sweet lips, that short, slightly raised chin and those eyes of fire, and I still hear the postilion's *Hue!* In fact, I am dreaming—and why need I hate him so when I wake?"

She heaved a deep sigh and rose to her feet; then, for the first time, she began to look about at the country aroused to civil war by the cruel nobleman whom she proposed to attack, single-handed and alone. Fascinated by the beauty of the landscape, she left the house, to breathe more freely in the open air; and if she chose her path at random, she certainly was guided toward the *Promenade* of the

town by the witchcraft of our minds that leads us to seek hope in the absurd. Thoughts conceived under the empire of that spell are often realized ; but in that case we attribute the prevision to the power called presentiment ; an unexplained but real power, which the passions always find obliging, like a flatterer who, among his numerous falsehoods, sometimes tells the truth.





### III

## A DAY WITHOUT A MORROW

\*

As the concluding events of this narrative were governed largely by the disposition of the localities in which they took place, it is indispensable to give here a minute description of those localities, without which the final catastrophe might be difficult of comprehension.

The town of Fougères is situated in part upon a schistose cliff, which one would say had at some time fallen forward from the mountains which close the broad valley of Couësnon at its western end, and take different names corresponding with their locations. The town is separated from the mountains to the westward by a gorge, at the bottom of which flows a little stream called the Nançon. That part of the cliff that faces to the east has the same prospect that one enjoys from the summit of La Pèlerine, while the part facing west overlooks nothing but the winding valley of the Nançon ; but there is one spot from which the view includes a

segment of the circle formed by the great valley and also the lovely meanderings of the smaller valley that opens into it. That spot, which was selected by the inhabitants for their promenade, and whither Mademoiselle de Verneuil now bent her steps, was the stage upon which the drama, begun at La Vivetière, was to come to its dénouement. And so, however picturesque the other portions of Fougères may be, our attention must be directed exclusively to the peculiarities of the district that can be seen from the Promenade.

To give an idea of the aspect presented by the cliff of Fougères when seen from that side, we may compare it to one of the immense towers outside of which Saracen architects built, from floor to floor, broad balconies joined to one another by spiral staircases. At the summit is a Gothic church, whose small spires, bell-tower and buttresses make it an almost perfect sugar loaf in shape. In front of the door of the church, which is dedicated to Saint-Léonard, is a small square of irregular shape, supported by a raised wall like a balustrade, from which a flight of steps leads to the Promenade. This esplanade winds about the cliff like a second cornice, a few yards below Place Saint-Léonard, and presents to view a broad tract planted with trees, which extends to the fortifications of the town. About sixty feet from the walls and rocks that support this terrace, which we owe to the fortunate disposition of the schist and to patient toil, is a winding road called the Queen's Staircase, cut in the rock, which

leads to a bridge over the Nançon built by Anne de Bretagne. And under this road, which forms a third cornice, gardens descend from terrace to terrace even to the river, like steps laden with flowers.

Parallel to the Promenade, a succession of high cliffs which take the name of the suburb in which they begin and are called the mountains of Saint-Sulpice, extend along the river and then descend in gentle slopes to the great valley where they take a sharp turn to the north. These cliffs, steep, barren and threatening, seem to touch the slaty rocks of the Promenade: in some places they are within gunshot and form a protection against the north winds for a narrow valley, six hundred feet deep, where the Nançon divides into three arms which water a plain crowded with factories and in a high state of cultivation.

Toward the south, at the point where the town properly so-called comes to an end, and the faubourg of Saint-Léonard begins, the cliff of Fougères makes a turn, becomes less steep, diminishes in height, and sweeps down into the great valley, following the river, which it forces thus against the mountains of Saint-Sulpice, forming a narrow defile, whence it escapes in two streams flowing toward Couësson, into which they both empty. This pretty group of stony hills is called the *Nid-aux-Crocs*, the valley between them is the *Val de Gibarry*, and its rich meadows furnish a large part of the butter known to epicures as La Prévalaye butter.

At the point where the Promenade touches the

fortifications, stands a tower called the *Tour du Pape-gaut*. Starting from this square structure, near which was the house occupied by Mademoiselle de Verneuil, are high walls, or the rock itself when it is sufficiently smooth and steep ; and the portion of the town located on this high impregnable base describes a great half-moon, at the end of which the cliffs slope and fall away to give passage to the Nançon. At that point is the gate leading to Faubourg Saint-Sulpice, which name is common to the gate and the faubourg. Farther on, upon a granite peak that dominates three valleys, where several roads meet, rise the ancient crenelated feudal towers of the château of Fougères, one of the hugest structures erected by the dukes of Bretagne, with walls ninety feet high and fifteen feet thick ; sheltered on the east by a pond, from which the Nançon takes its source, flowing through its moats, and turning mill-wheels between Porte Saint-Sulpice and the drawbridges of the fortress ; defended on the west by the solidity of the blocks of granite on which it rests.

Thus, from the Promenade to this magnificent ruin of the Middle Ages, enveloped in its mantle of ivy, embellished with its round and square towers, in each of which a whole regiment may be quartered—the château, the town and its cliff, protected by perpendicular walls or escarpments hewn out of the solid rock, form a vast horseshoe, surrounded by precipices upon which the Bretons have, in the course of time, cut some few narrow paths. Here

and there huge boulders protrude like ornaments. In some places, water trickles out from the crevices in which stunted trees are growing. Farther on, some portions of the cliff, less steep than others, afford a foothold for verdure which attracts the goats. On all sides the heather, growing in damp fissures, carpets the dark inequalities of the ground with its pink garlands. At the bottom of this immense tunnel, the little river winds its way through plains always green, and smooth as a carpet.

At the foot of the château, in the midst of huge masses of granite, stands the church dedicated to Saint-Sulpice, which gives its name to a suburb on the other side of the Nançon. This suburb, which seems to have been tossed into an abyss, and its church, whose pointed steeple falls short of the top of the cliffs that seem ready to topple over upon it and upon the cottages that surround it, are picturesquely bathed by some of the streams tributary to the Nançon, shaded by trees and embellished by gardens ; they make a jagged dent in the half-moon described by the Promenade, the town and the château, and offer, in their details, a striking contrast to the solemn aspect of the amphitheatre they face. Lastly, Fougères as a whole, its suburbs and its churches, and even the mountains of Saint-Sulpice, are surmounted by the heights of Rillé, which form a part of the general chain enclosing the valley of Couësson.

Such are the most salient features of this locality, whose principal characteristic is a wild roughness,

softened by laughing details, by a happy combination of the most magnificent works of man with the caprices of a soil bristling with unexpected contrasts, by an indefinable something that takes one constantly by surprise, that astonishes and bewilders one. Nowhere in France does the traveller find such grand contrasts as those presented by the great basin of the Couësnon and the smaller valleys lost among the heights of Rillé and the cliffs of Fougères. They abound in those wonderful beauties in which chance triumphs over design, and which are lacking in none of the harmonies of nature. There are clear, limpid, swift flowing streams ; mountains clad in the hardy vegetation of those regions ; threatening cliffs and graceful buildings ; fortifications built by nature, and granite towers built by men ; and all the artifices of light and shade, all the contrasts between the different kinds of foliage, so highly prized by painters ; groups of houses swarming with an active population, and desert places where the granite does not suffer the presence even of the white moss that clings to rocks ; in a word, all the details that one can ask of a landscape : graceful beauty and awful grandeur ; a poem full of magic charms, sublime pictures, delightful rustic scenes ! It is Bretagne in its flower.

The Tour du Papegaut, so called, upon which the house occupied by Mademoiselle de Verneuil was built, has its base at the very foot of the precipice, and rises to the esplanade constructed in the shape of a cornice in front of Saint-Léonard's church.

From that house, isolated on three sides, one could see at the same moment the great horseshoe that begins at the tower, the serpentine valley of the Nançon, and Place Saint-Léonard. It was one of a row of wooden buildings three centuries old, situated on a line parallel with the southern side of the church, with which they form a narrow lane leading into a street that runs down hill, skirting the church wall, to Porte Saint-Léonard, toward which Mademoiselle de Verneuil was descending.

Marie naturally walked toward the Promenade, instead of turning into the square in front of the church, which was farther up the hill. When she had passed through the little green wicket in front of the military post then stationed in the tower of Porte Saint-Léonard, the magnificence of the spectacle imposed silence on her passions for a moment. She gazed in admiration at the vast segment of the great valley of Couësnon which lay before her eyes, from the summit of La Pèlerine to the plateau over which the Vitré road passes; then her eyes rested on the *Nid-aux-Crocs* and the tortuous windings of the *Val de Gibarry*, whose surrounding peaks were bathed in the misty rays of the setting sun. She was almost terrified by the depth of the valley of the Nançon, whose tallest poplars barely reached the walls of the gardens below the Queen's Stairway. She progressed from surprise to surprise until she reached the point from which she could see both the great valley, across the Val de Gibarry, and the lovely landscape framed by the horseshoe of the

town, by the mountains of Saint-Sulpice and by the heights of Rillé. At that hour of the day, the smoke from the houses in the faubourg and in the valleys formed a sort of cloud, so that objects could be seen only through a bluish veil ; the too vivid tints of the sunlight were beginning to fade away ; the sky took on a pearl-gray hue ; the moon cast its veil of light over the beautiful abyss : everything, in fact, tended to plunge the soul in reverie and to assist in evoking the images of dear ones.

But suddenly neither the tiled roofs of Faubourg Saint-Sulpice, nor its church, whose audacious spire was lost to sight in the depths of the valley, nor the century old cloaks of ivy and clematis that enveloped the walls of the ancient fortress through which the Nançon foamed beneath the mill wheels—in a word, nothing in the landscape now interested her. In vain did the setting sun cast its golden dust and its red beams upon the graceful dwellings scattered among the cliffs, along the streams, and over the meadows, she stood motionless before the rocks of Saint-Sulpice. The mad hope that had led her to the Promenade was miraculously fulfilled. Through the clumps of broom growing upon the opposite summits, she thought that she could recognize, despite the goatskins in which they were dressed, several of the guests at La Vivetière, among them the Gars, whose slightest movements were distinguishable in the softened light of the setting sun. A few steps behind the principal group, she saw her redoubtable foe, Madame du Gua. For a moment, Mademoiselle



de Verneuil might well have thought that she was dreaming ; but her rival's hatred soon proved that everything was living in that dream. The profound attention with which she observed the marquis's slightest gesture prevented her noticing that Madame du Gua was taking careful aim at her with a long gun. Soon a report awoke the mountain echoes, and the bullet that whistled by Marie's head revealed her rival's skill.

" She sends me her card ! " she said to herself with a smile.

At the same moment a succession of *Qui vives ?* rang out, from sentinel to sentinel, from the château to Porte Saint-Léonard, and proved to the Chouans the watchfulness of the Fougerais, since the least vulnerable portion of their ramparts was so well guarded.

" It is she and it is he ! " said Marie to herself.

To go in pursuit of the marquis, to follow him, to take him by surprise—the thought passed through her mind like a flash of lightning.

" I have no weapon ! " she cried.

Then she remembered that when she left Paris she had thrown into one of her boxes a beautiful poniard, once worn by a sultan's favorite, with which she thought it well to arm herself when about to visit the scene of war, like those amusing persons who provide themselves with note-books in which to jot down the ideas that come to them while traveling ; but at that time, she was thinking less of the prospect of having to shed blood than of the pleasure

of carrying a pretty hanger adorned with precious stones and of playing with the gleaming blade. Three days before, she had keenly regretted having left the weapon in her box, when she had longed to kill herself in order to escape the degrading punishment which her rival proposed to inflict upon her. She hastened to her room, found the dagger, placed it in her belt, wrapped a great shawl about her waist and shoulders, and a black lace scarf about her head, put on one of the broad-brimmed hats worn by the Chouans, which belonged to a servant in her house, and with the presence of mind that the passions sometimes lend, she took the marquis's glove given her by Marche-à-Terre as a passport, said in reply to a question from the terrified Francine : " What would you have ! I would go and seek *him* in hell ! " and returned to the Promenade.

The Gars was still in the same place, but alone. Judging from the direction in which his field-glass was pointed, he seemed to be examining, with the careful scrutiny of a soldier, the different fords of the Nançon, the Queen's Stairway, and the road which runs from Porte Saint-Sulpice around the church of that name and joins the main road under the fire of the château. Mademoiselle de Verneuil darted into one of the narrow paths worn by the goats and the goatherds on the slope of the Promenade, reached the Queen's Stairway, went down to the foot of the precipice, forded the Nançon, passed through the faubourg, divined, like a bird in the desert, the path she must take amid the frowning escarpments of the

mountains of Saint-Sulpice, came ere long to a slippery road marked out over the blocks of granite, and, despite the broom-plant, the sharp thorns and the stones with which it bristled, she followed it up the mountain with a degree of energy unknown to man, but which woman, when carried away by passion, exhibits momentarily. Darkness surprised Marie just as she reached the summit and was trying to ascertain, with the help of the moon's pale beams, which road the marquis was likely to have taken ; a persistent but unsuccessful search and the prevailing silence convinced her that the Chouans and their leader had retired. Her passionate efforts subsided suddenly with the hope that had inspired them. Finding herself alone, in the night-time, in an unfamiliar country where war was raging, she began to reflect, and the urgent advice of Hulot and Madame du Gua's musket shot made her tremble with fright. The silence of the night, which was so intense on the mountains, enabled her to hear the slightest sound made by a falling leaf, even at a great distance, and those faint sounds vibrated in the air as if to furnish a doleful measure of the solitude or the silence. The wind was active in the upper regions and chased the clouds rapidly across the sky, producing alternations of light and shadow, the effect of which was to increase her terror by imparting a fantastic and awful aspect to the most inoffensive objects. She turned her eyes toward the houses of Fougères, where the lights twinkled like so many terrestrial stars, and suddenly she saw distinctly the

Tour du Papegaut. She had but a short distance to go to reach her home, but that distance involved a precipice. She remembered enough of the chasms that bordered the narrow path by which she had come to realize that she would encounter greater risks by returning to Fougères than by pursuing her enterprise. She thought that the marquis's glove would do away with all the dangers of her nocturnal expedition, if the Chouans were in possession of the fields. Madame du Gua alone she might have reason to fear. At that thought Marie grasped her dagger and tried to find her way to a house whose roof she had noticed as she approached the cliffs of Saint-Sulpice ; but she walked slowly, for she had hitherto known nothing of the impression of sombre majesty that weighs upon a solitary mortal in the darkness, in the centre of a wild region where lofty mountains rear their heads on all sides like an assemblage of giants.

The rustling of her dress as it caught on the thorns, made her start more than once, and more than once she quickened her pace, only to slacken it again, thinking that her last hour had come. But soon her surroundings assumed a character that the most fearless men might well have been unable to resist, and plunged Mademoiselle de Verneuil into one of those paroxysms of terror which press so hard upon the springs of life that everything is exaggerated in the individuals attacked by them, strength as well as weakness. The feeblest creatures at such times perform incredible feats of strength and the strongest go mad with fear. Marie heard strange

sounds not far away ; distinct and vague at once, as the night was by turns dark and luminous, they denoted confusion, tumult, and the ear was fatigued by straining to make out what they were ; they came from the bowels of the earth which seemed to tremble beneath the feet of an immense number of marching men. A momentary brightness in the sky enabled Mademoiselle de Verneuil to see, only a few steps away, a long line of hideous figures, which waved back and forth like stalks of grain and glided along like ghosts ; but she hardly saw them, for the darkness fell again at once like a black curtain and shut out that ghastly picture, filled with gleaming yellow eyes. She hastily moved away and ran to the top of a bank, to avoid three of the horrible figures, which were coming toward her.

“ Did you see *it* ? ” asked one.

“ I felt a cold wind when it passed me,” replied a hoarse voice.

“ And I smelt the damp smell of a cemetery,” said the third.

“ Is it white ? ” asked the first.

“ Why,” said the second, “ is it the only one to return of all who died at La Pèlerine ? ”

“ Ah ! why, indeed ! ” replied the third. “ Why do those who belong to the Sacred Heart have the preference ? However, I prefer to die without confession rather than wander about like him, without eating or drinking, with no blood in my veins or flesh on my bones ! ”

“ Ah ! ”

That exclamation, or rather that terrible shriek came from the group when one of the three Chouans pointed to the slender figure and pale face of Mademoiselle de Verneuil, who fled with terrifying rapidity, but without making the slightest sound.

"There it is!"—"There it is!"—"Where is it?"—"There"—"Here."—"It has gone!"—"No"—"Yes!"—"Do you see it?"

These disjointed sentences sounded like the monotonous murmur of waves on the beach.

Mademoiselle de Verneuil ran boldly in the direction of the house and saw the indistinct figures of a number of people who fled at her approach with every indication of panic terror. It was as if she were carried onward by a hitherto unknown power, whose influence controlled her actions; the inexplicable lightness of her body became a new subject of terror to herself. Those figures which rose in a body at her approach, as if they had been lying underground, emitted groans in which there was nothing human. At last she arrived, not without difficulty, at a neglected garden, the hedges and gates of which were broken down. Being ordered to stop by a sentinel, she showed him her glove. As the moonlight fell upon her face, the carbine fell from the hands of the Chouan, who was already taking aim at her but who, at sight of her face, uttered the same hoarse cry with which the fields were ringing. She saw some large buildings, in which there were lights that indicated occupied rooms, and she reached the walls without meeting

any obstacles. Through the first window she approached, she saw Madame du Gua with the leaders who had assembled at La Vivetière. Bewildered by that sight as well as by her consciousness of her own danger, she rushed hastily to a small opening protected by iron bars, and saw, within two yards of her, the marquis, melancholy and alone, in a long arched hall. The reflection of the fire, in front of which he sat in a clumsy chair, lighted up his face with flickering, ruddy tints that imparted to the scene the character of a vision. Trembling with excitement, the poor girl glued her face to the bars, and hoped in the profound silence that reigned, to hear him if he spoke; seeing him thus, pale, discouraged, prostrated, she flattered herself that she was partly responsible for his depression; then her anger changed to pity, her pity to tenderness, and she suddenly became conscious that she had not been led thither solely by thoughts of vengeance. The marquis rose, turned his head, and stood as if transfixed when he saw, as in a cloud, the features of Mademoiselle de Verneuil; he made an impatient, scornful gesture and cried:

“So I am to see that devil everywhere even when I am awake!”

This demonstration of withering scorn extorted from the poor girl a wild laugh that made the young nobleman start, and he rushed to the window. Mademoiselle de Verneuil fled. She heard a man's footstep close at hand, which she took to be Montauran's; and, to escape him, nothing was an ob-

stacle to her, she would have scaled walls and flown through the air, she would have found the road to hell to avoid reading again in letters of flame the words : *he despises you!* written on that man's brow—words which a voice within her breast was shouting at her with the sonorous tones of a trumpet.

After running some distance without any idea where she was going, she stopped upon feeling a blast of damp air. Alarmed by the sound of footsteps of several persons and impelled by fear, she descended a staircase that led into a cavern. When she reached the last stair, she listened to see if she could ascertain the direction taken by those who were pursuing her ; but, notwithstanding divers loud noises outside, she heard the lugubrious groaning of a human voice which increased her terror. A flash of light from the top of the staircase made her fear that her hiding-place was known to her persecutors, and she summoned fresh strength to escape them. It was very difficult for her to understand, a few moments later when she had collected her ideas, by what means she had succeeded in climbing the low wall where she was hiding. Indeed she did not at first notice the extremely cramped position in which she was resting ; but it became unendurable at last, for she was bent double under one end of an arch, like the crouching Venus placed in a niche that was too narrow for it. The wall, which was of granite and quite thick, separated the passage leading to the stairway from the cave from which the groans came. She soon saw an unknown



man enveloped in goatskins, descending below her and turning in under the arch, with nothing in his movements to denote a hasty search. Impatient to ascertain whether there was any hope of escape for her, Mademoiselle de Verneuil waited anxiously for the light carried by the stranger to light up the cavern, where she could see a shapeless but animate mass lying on the ground, struggling to reach a certain part of the wall with violent, frequently repeated movements like the contortions of a carp lying on the shore.

A small torch of resinous pine soon cast its dim, bluish light around the cave. Notwithstanding the sombre poesy with which Mademoiselle de Verneuil's imagination endowed those dark arches, which echoed the words of a piteous prayer, she was obliged to admit to herself that she was in a long-disused underground kitchen. In the light the shapeless mass became a short, very stout man, all of whose limbs had been carefully bound, but who seemed to have been left upon the damp flags without any sort of care on the part of those who had taken possession of him. At the sight of the stranger holding a torch in one hand and a bunch of sticks in the other, the prisoner uttered a deep groan which attacked Mademoiselle de Verneuil's sensibilities so keenly that she forgot her own terror, her despair, the horribly cramped position of all her limbs which were quite numb; and she tried to keep perfectly still. The Chouan threw his bundle of sticks into the fireplace, after assuring

himself of the solidity of an old crane that was fastened to a large iron plate, and set fire to the wood with his torch. Not without renewed terror did Mademoiselle de Verneuil then recognize the crafty Pille-Miche, to whom her rival had abandoned her, and whose face, lighted up by the flame, resembled the little men grotesquely carved from boxwood that we see in Germany. The groans uttered by his prisoner caused those wrinkled sunburned features to expand in a broad smile.

“You see,” he said to the victim, “we Christians don’t break our word like you. This fire will start the blood in your legs and hands and tongue. *Quien ! quien !* I don’t see any dripping-pan to put under your feet ; they’re so fat, the grease may put out the fire. This house of yours is very badly supplied, not to have everything the master needs to make him comfortable when he’s warming himself, eh ? ”

The victim uttered a piercing shriek as if he had hoped to make himself heard outside the cave and summon a rescuer.

“Oh ! you can sing away, Monsieur d’Orgemont ! they’re all abed up there and Marche-à-Terre is just behind me, he’ll shut the door of the cellar.”

As he spoke, Pille-Miche sounded with the end of his gun-barrel the mantel-piece, the flag stones with which the kitchen was paved, the walls and the oven, trying to discover the hiding-place in which the miser kept his gold. The search was conducted so skilfully that D’Orgemont held his peace, as if he

feared to be betrayed by some frightened servant ; for, although he trusted no one, his habits might well have formed a basis for accurate deductions. From time to time Pille-Miche turned sharply around and looked at his victim, as in the game in which children try to guess from the artless expression of the one who has hidden a certain object, whether they are approaching it or moving away from it. D'Orgemont feigned alarm when he saw the Chouan striking the ovens, which gave back a hollow sound, and seemed disposed to play thus upon the greedy credulity of Pille-Miche for some time. At that moment three other Chouans came hurriedly down the stairs and into the kitchen. At sight of Marche-à-Terre, Pille-Miche discontinued his search, bestowing upon D'Orgemont a glance instinct with the ferocity aroused by his thwarted avarice.

“ Marie Lambrequin has come to life again ! ” said Marche-à-Terre, maintaining an attitude that indicated that all other matters of interest faded into insignificance before such momentous news as that.

“ That don't surprise me, ” rejoined Pille-Miche, “ he went to communion so often ! the good God seemed to belong to him ! ”

“ Ha ! ha ! ” laughed Mène-à-Bien, “ that did him as much good as shoes do a dead man. You see he didn't receive absolution before that affair on La Pèlerine ; he slandered Goguelu's daughter and had a mortal sin to answer for. Then Abbé Gudin says like this, that he'll be a ghost two months before he comes back altogether ! We saw him pass in front

of us ; he's pale and cold and light-footed, and he smells of the cemetery."

"His Reverence says too that if the ghost could get hold of someone, he'd make him his comrade," added the fourth Chouan.

The grotesque appearance of the last speaker aroused Marche-à-Terre from the religious reverie in which he had been plunged by the performance of a miracle, which miracle, according to Abbé Gudin, fervid piety might cause to be repeated in the case of every devout defender of the religion and the king.

"You see, Galope-Chopine," he said to the neophyte, with much gravity, "what the slightest neglect of the duties enjoined by our holy religion brings us to. Sainte Anne d'Auray tells us to have no pity for each other for the smallest sins. Your cousin Pille-Miche has asked for the *surveillance* of Fougères for you, the Gars agrees to entrust it to you, and you will be well paid ; but you know what flour we use to make cakes for traitors ? "

"Yes, Monsieur Marche-à-Terre."

"You know why I say this to you, eh ? Some people say that you love cider and big sous ; but this isn't the time to skin flints, you must belong to us and to no one else."

"Saving your presence, Monsieur Marche-à-Terre, cider and sous be two things that don't prevent salvation."

"If my cousin does anything foolish," said Pille-Miche, "it will be from ignorance."

“If anything goes wrong, no matter how,” cried Marche-à-Terre in a voice that made the arches ring, “I shan’t miss him.—You must answer to me for him,” he added, turning to Pille-Miche, “for if he breaks faith with us, I’ll take something from him to line your goatskin with.”

“But, with all respect, Monsieur Marche-à-Terre,” rejoined Galope-Chopine, “haven’t you often thought the *contre-chuins* were *chuins*?”

“My friend,” retorted Marche-à-Terre drily, “don’t let that happen to you again, or I’ll cut you in two like a turnip. As for the Gars’s messengers, they will have his glove. But, since the affair of La Vivetière, the *grande garce* fastens a green ribbon to it.”

Pille-Miche hastily touched his companion’s elbow and pointed to D’Orgemont, who pretended to be asleep; but Marche-à-Terre and Pille-Miche knew by experience that no one had ever slept in their chimney-corner; and although the last words addressed to Galope-Chopine were spoken in a low tone, as they might have been overheard by the captive, the four Chouans all looked at him for a moment, thinking doubtless that fear had deprived him of the use of his senses. Suddenly, at a slight sign from Marche-à-Terre, Pille-Miche removed D’Orgemont’s shoes and stockings, and Mène-à-Bien and Galope-Chopine seized him under the arms and carried him to the fire; then Marche-à-Terre took one of the cords with which the bundle of sticks was tied and fastened the miser’s feet to

the crane. The frightful celerity with which these movements were carried out, as well as their nature, caused the victim to utter shrieks that became heart-rending when Pille-Miche raked the coals together under his legs.

"My friends, my good friends," cried D'Orgemont, "you are going to make me suffer terribly! I'm a Christian like you—"

"You lie in your throat," retorted Marche-à-Terre. "Your brother denied God. As for you, you bought the Abbey of Juvigny. Abbé Gudin says we can roast apostates without scruple."

"But, my brothers in God, I don't refuse to pay you."

"We gave you a fortnight, two months have passed and Galope-Chopine here hasn't received a sou."

"Haven't you received anything, Galope-Chopine?" asked the miser in despair.

"Nothing, Monsieur D'Orgemont!" replied Galope-Chopine, alarmed at the question.

The shrieks, which had become a continuous wail like the rattle in a dying man's throat, recommenced with incredible violence. The four Chouans, who were as well used to this spectacle as to seeing their dogs walk without shoes, looked on so coldly as D'Orgemont writhed and howled, that they resembled travellers waiting in front of the fire at an inn, until the joint should be roasted sufficiently to be eaten.

"I am dying! I am dying!" cried the victim—"and you won't have my money."

Despite the vehemence of his outcries, Pille-Miche saw that the fire had not yet scorched the skin; whereupon he stirred up the coals most artistically so as to produce a gentle flame. At that, D'Orgemont said in a hollow voice :

"Unbind me, my friends.—What do you want? a hundred crowns, a thousand crowns, ten thousand, a hundred thousand? I'll give you two hundred crowns."

His voice was so pitiful that Mademoiselle de Verneuil forgot her own danger and allowed an exclamation to escape her.

"Who spoke?" demanded Marche-à-Terre.

The Chouans glanced about them in terror. Brave as they were before the deadly cannon's mouth, those men would not stand before a ghost. Pille-Miche alone listened attentively to the admissions that increasing pain extorted from his victim.

"Five hundred crowns—yes, I'll give that," said the miser.

"Bah! where are they?" replied Pille-Miche calmly.

"Where? they're under the first apple-tree—Holy Virgin!—at the foot of the garden, to the left—You are brigands—thieves—Ah! I am dying—There are ten thousand francs there."

"I don't want your francs," said Marche-à-Terre, "I must have livres. The crowns of your Republic have pagan figures on them that will never pass current."

"The money's in livres, in good louis d'or. But

unbind me, unbind me.—You know now where my life is—my treasure!”

The four Chouans looked from one to another as if considering which one of themselves they could trust to send to disinter the treasure. At that moment their cannibal-like cruelty stirred Mademoiselle de Verneuil to such a pitch of horror, that, without knowing whether the rôle her pale face had assigned her would still preserve her from danger, she cried out courageously in a solemn voice :

“Do you not fear the wrath of God? Unbind him, savages!”

The Chouans raised their heads, saw two eyes shining like stars in the darkness, and fled in dismay. Mademoiselle de Verneuil jumped down into the kitchen, ran to D’Orgemont and pulled him away from the fire with such force that the withes broke; then she cut with her dagger the cords that bound him. When the miser was free and on his feet, the first expression that his face assumed was a mournful but sardonic smile.

“Go on, go to the apple tree, brigands!” he said. “Aha! this makes twice that I have fooled them and they won’t catch me a third time!”

A moment later a woman’s voice was heard outside the cave.

“A *ghost!* a *ghost!*” cried Madame du Gua; “you fools, it is *she!* A thousand crowns to the man that brings me that strumpet’s head!”

Mademoiselle de Verneuil turned pale; but the miser smiled, took her by the hand, led her into the



fireplace, taking care not to disturb the fire—which occupied but a small space—in order to leave no trace of their passage ; he pressed a spring, the iron plate moved aside, and when their common enemies entered the cave, the heavy door of the hiding-place had already returned noiselessly to its place. Thereupon the Parisian understood the meaning of the carp-like motions she had noticed on the part of the unfortunate banker.

“ You see, madame,” cried Marche-à-Terre, “ the ghost has taken the Blue away with him.”

The terror of the Chouans must have been great, for those words were followed by such profound silence that D’Orgemont and his companion could hear them muttering :

“ *Ave, Sancta Anna Auriaca, gratia plena, Dominus tecum,*” etc.

“ They’re praying, the idiots !” cried D’Orgemont.

“ Aren’t you afraid,” said Marie, interrupting him, “ of their discovering our—? ”

A hearty laugh from the old miser dissipated the young Parisian’s fears.

“ The plate is set in a block of granite ten inches thick. We hear them and they don’t hear us.”

He gently took his rescuer’s hand, and led her to a crack from which issued puffs of fresh air, and she understood that the opening had been made in the flue of the chimney.

“ Ha ! ha !” laughed D’Orgemont. “ The devil ! my legs are smarting somewhat ! *Charette’s Mare,*

as they call her at Nantes, isn't fool enough to contradict her faithful followers ; she knows well enough that if they weren't such ignorant brutes, they wouldn't fight against their own interests. There, she's praying too. She must be a pleasant sight saying her *Ave* to Sainte Anne d'Auray ! She'd do better to rob some diligence to pay the four thousand francs she owes me. With interest and costs it amounts to four thousand seven hundred and eighty francs and some centimes."

The prayer concluded, the Chouans rose and went away. Old D'Orgemont pressed Mademoiselle de Verneuil's hand as if to warn her that they were not yet out of danger.

"No, madame," cried Pille-Miche, after a few moments of silence, "you might stay here ten years and they wouldn't come back."

"But she hasn't gone out, she must be here !" persisted *Charette's Mare*.

"No, madame, no, they flew away through the walls. Hasn't the devil already carried off one of our sworn brothers before our very eyes ?"

"What, Pille-Miche, can't you, who are as great a miser as he, see that the old crab must have spent a few thousand francs building a hiding-place with a secret entrance somewhere in the foundations of this old crypt ?"

The miser and the young woman heard Pille-Miche utter a hoarse laugh.

"Indeed !" he said.

"Stay here," continued Madame du Gua. "Wait

for them at the entrance. For a single shot from your gun, I will give you all you find in our usurer's strong-box. If you want me to forgive you for selling that girl when I told you to kill her, obey me."

"Usurer!" said old D'Orgemont, "why, I only charged her nine per cent. To be sure I have a mortgage! But still you see how grateful she is! I tell you, madame, if God punishes us for doing evil, the devil is on hand to punish us for doing right; and the man who is placed between those alternatives, without knowing anything of the future, always makes me think of a rule of three in which the X can't be found."

He emitted a hollow sigh of a sort peculiar to himself, in which it seemed as if the air, passing through his larynx, came in contact with and attacked two old slack chords. The noise made by Pille-Miche and Madame du Gua in sounding the walls and arches and flagstones again, seemed to reassure D'Orgemont, who took his rescuer's hand to assist her to ascend a narrow spiral staircase cut in a granite wall. After they had climbed about twenty stairs, the light of a lamp shone dimly upon their faces. The miser stopped, turned to his companion, examined her face, as he would have scrutinized a suspicious note of hand offered for discount, and uttered his terrible sigh.

"By bringing you here," he said after a brief silence, "I have paid you in full for the service you rendered me; therefore I don't see why I should give you—"

“Leave me here, monsieur, I ask nothing of you,” she said.

These last words, and, it may be, the disdain depicted on that lovely face, seemed to reassure the little old fellow, for he replied with another sigh :

“Oh ! having brought you here, I have done too much not to go on.”

He courteously assisted Marie to ascend a few more steps of strange construction, and introduced her, half amiably, half sullenly, into a small cabinet about four feet square, lighted by a lamp that hung from the ceiling. It was easy to see that the miser had made all his arrangements for passing more than one day in that retreat, if the incidents of the civil war should require him to remain there longer.

“Don’t go near the wall, you will get your clothes all white,” said D’Orgemont suddenly.

And he hurriedly placed his hand between the young girl’s shawl and the wall, which seemed to have been freshly plastered. The old miser’s gesture produced an entirely contrary effect to that which he expected. Mademoiselle de Verneuil suddenly looked straight before her and saw in a corner a structure that drew from her a cry of alarm, for she divined that a human being had been encased in mortar and placed therein in a standing position ; D’Orgemont frantically motioned to her to be silent and his little china-blue eyes exhibited as much terror as his companion’s.

“Fool ! Do you suppose I murdered him ? It was

my brother," he said, varying his sigh in a lugubrious way. "He was the first priest to take the oath. This was the only spot where he was safe against the fury of the Chouans and the other priests. The idea of persecuting a worthy man of such well-ordered life ! He was my older brother, nobody else had the patience to teach me the calculus. Oh ! he was a good priest ! He was an economical creature and knew how to save. It's four years since he died, I don't know of what disease ; but these priests have a habit of kneeling from time to time to pray, and perhaps he couldn't accustom himself to standing here all the time like me. I put him there ; anywhere else, *they* would have dug him up. Some day I may be able to bury him in holy ground, as the poor man said, who only took the oath through fear."

A tear stood in the little old man's dry eyes, and his red wig seemed less ugly to the young woman, who turned her eyes away, secretly respecting his grief ; but, despite this moving scene, D'Orgemont said to her again :

"Don't go near the wall, you—"

And he did not take his eyes from Mademoiselle de Verneuil's, hoping thus to prevent her from scrutinizing too closely the walls of the cabinet, where the too rarefied air was not sufficient to fill the lungs. However, Marie succeeded in concealing one glance from her Argus, and the strange protuberances in the walls led her to think that the miser had built them himself with bags of silver or of gold.

For a few moments past, D'Orgemont had been in a state of grotesque and blissful bewilderment. The pain caused by the scorching of his legs and his terror at the thought of a human being standing among his treasures, could be read in every one of his wrinkles, but at the same time there was an unaccustomed fire in his dull eyes, expressive of the generous emotion aroused within him by the perilous proximity of his rescuer, whose pink and white cheeks attracted the lips, whose dark, velvety eyes sent the blood rushing to his heart in such hot waves that he could not tell whether they signified life or death.

"Are you married?" he asked in a trembling voice.

"No," she replied with a smile.

"I have a little something," he continued, with his peculiar sigh, "although I am not so rich as they all say. A girl like you must like diamonds, jewels, fine carriages, money," he added, looking around him with a frightened air. "I have all those to give you, after my death. And if you would—"

The old man's eye betrayed such shrewd scheming, even in this ephemeral passion, that Mademoiselle de Verneuil, as she shook her head negatively, could not avoid the thought that the miser's only idea in marrying her was to bury his secret in the heart of another himself.

"Money!" she said with an ironical glance at D'Orgemont that made him happy and vexed him at the same time, "money has no charms for me.

You would be three times richer than you are, if all the gold I have refused were here."

"Don't go near the wa—"

"And yet they never asked me for anything more than a look," she added with indescribable pride.

"You did wrong, it would have been an excellent speculation. But consider."

"Consider," interrupted Mademoiselle de Verneuil, "that I have just heard a voice whose lightest word has more value for me than all your wealth."

"You don't know how great it is—"

Before the miser could prevent her, Marie, by touching with her finger a small colored engraving of Louis XV. on horseback, caused it to move aside, and suddenly saw, in a room below, the marquis engaged in loading a blunderbuss. The opening concealed by the small panel over which the engraving was fastened, seemed to correspond with some ornament in the ceiling of the lower room, which was in all probability the royalist general's sleeping-room. D'Orgemont replaced the old engraving with the greatest precaution and looked at the young woman with a stern expression.

"Don't say a word if you love your life! You haven't thrown your grappling irons aboard a small skiff," he whispered in her ear after a pause. "Do you know that the Marquis de Montauran has a hundred thousand francs a year in leased real estate which hasn't yet been sold? Now there's a decree of the consuls, that I read in the *Primidi de l'Ille-et-Vilaine*, putting a stop to sequestrations.

Ha ! ha ! you think him a prettier fellow now, don't you ? Your eyes shine like two new louis d'or."

Mademoiselle de Verneuil's eyes had in truth become exceedingly animated when she heard the tones of a well-known voice. Since she had been standing there, buried in a silver mine, as it were, the springs of her mind, which had bent under the strain of recent events, renewed their elasticity. She seemed to have taken a fateful resolution and to have an inkling of the means of carrying it out.

"A man doesn't recover from such contempt as he has for me," she said to herself, "and if he is not to love me any more, I propose to kill him. No other woman shall have him."

"No, abbé, no !" she heard the young general's voice exclaim ; "it must be so."

"Monsieur le marquis," remonstrated Abbé Gudin proudly, "you will scandalize all Bretagne by giving this ball at Saint-James. Preachers and not dancers are the ones to arouse our villages. Supply guns and not violins."

"You have wit enough, abbé, to understand that I cannot ascertain definitely what I can undertake with my partisans except by bringing them all together. A dinner-party seems to me to afford a more favorable opportunity to examine their faces and find out their intentions than all the espionage in the world, and furthermore, I have a perfect horror of espionage ; we will make them talk, glass in hand."

Marie started at his words, for she conceived the



idea of going to the ball and taking her revenge there.

“Do you take me for an idiot with your sermon on dancing?” continued Montauran. “Wouldn’t you be glad to take part in a jig in order to procure your rehabilitation under your new name of Fathers of the Faith? Don’t you know that the Bretons go from the mass to the dance? Don’t you know that Messieurs Hyde de Neuville and D’Andigné had a conference with the First Consul five days ago on the subject of restoring Louis XVIII.? If I am preparing at this moment to risk such a rash *coup*, it is for the sole purpose of adding the weight of our hob-nailed shoes to those negotiations. Don’t you know that all the leaders of La Vendée, even Fontaine himself, are talking of submission? Ah! monsieur, the princes have evidently been deceived as to the condition of France. The devoted attachments of which they were told so much are attachments to rank and position. Although I have dipped my feet in blood, abbé, I do not wish to plunge into it up to the waist unless with a serious purpose. I devoted my life to the king, not to four scatterbrains, to men over head and ears in debt like Rifoël, to brigands, to—”

“Say frankly, monsieur, to abbés who collect tribute on the high-roads in order to carry on the war!” interposed Abbé Gudin.

“Why should I not say it?” the marquis retorted sharply. “I will say more, the heroic days of La Vendée have gone by.”

"Monsieur le marquis, we shall find a way to perform miracles without you."

"Yes, miracles like this of Marie Lambrequin," rejoined the marquis with a smile. "Come, abbé, no offence! I know that you risk your own life and shoot a Blue as well as you say an *oremus*. With God's help I hope to have you take part, with a mitre on your head, at the king's coronation."

That last phrase evidently exerted a magic influence upon Abbé Gudin, for they heard the ringing of a gun barrel, and he cried:

"I have fifty cartridges in my pockets, monsieur le marquis, and my life belongs to the king!"

"There's another of my debtors," said the miser to Mademoiselle de Verneuil. "I don't refer to the five or six hundred wretched crowns that he borrowed of me, but to a blood debt, which, I trust, will be repaid. The infernal Jesuit will never have as much misfortune as I wish him; he had sworn my brother's death and raised the province against him. Why? because the poor fellow was afraid of the new laws!"

He put his ear to a certain spot in the wall of his hiding-place.

"There are all those brigands going off," he said. "They're going to perform another miracle! God grant they don't try to bid me adieu as they did the last time, by setting fire to my house!"

After about half an hour, during which Mademoiselle de Verneuil and D'Orgemont looked at each

other as if they were looking at a picture, they heard Galope-Chopine's hoarse, harsh voice.

"There's no more danger, Monsieur d'Orgemont," he said. "But I have earned my thirty crowns this time!"

"My child," said the miser, "swear to close your eyes."

Mademoiselle de Verneuil placed one hand over her eyes; but for greater security the old man blew out the lamp, took his rescuer by the hand and assisted her to take seven or eight steps along a narrow, winding passage; after a moment or two, he gently took her hand from her eyes and she found herself in the room the Marquis de Montauran had just left, which was the miser's private apartment.

"My dear child," said the old man, "you can safely go. Don't look around you so. I suppose you have no money? See, here are ten crowns; there are some clipped ones, but they'll pass. When you leave the garden you will find a path leading to the town, or, as they say nowadays, to the district. But the Chouans are at Fougères, and it is probable you may not be able to return there at once, so you may need a safe asylum. Mark well what I am going to say to you and take advantage of it only in extreme danger. On the road leading to the *Nid-aux-Crocs* through the Val de Gibarry, you will see a farm where Tall Cibot, called Galope-Chopine, lives; go in and say to his wife: 'Good-day, *Bécanière!*' and Barbette will conceal you. If Galope-Chopine discovers you, either he'll take you

for a ghost, if it's dark, or ten crowns will soften him if it's daylight. Adieu! our accounts are settled. If you choose," he added, waving his hand toward the fields that surrounded the house, "all this shall be yours!"

Mademoiselle de Verneuil bestowed a grateful glance on the singular being and succeeded in extorting from him a sigh in a succession of widely different tones.

"Of course you will return my ten crowns—observe that I say nothing about interest—you can place them to my credit with Maître Patrat, the notary at Fougères, who, if you choose, will draw our marriage contract, my treasure?—Adieu."

"Adieu," said she, smiling and waving her hand to him.

"If you need money," he cried, "I'll lend you some at five per cent! Yes, only five—Did I say five?"

She had gone.

"She looks to me like an honest girl," said D'Orgemont to himself; "however, I'll change the secret opening in my fire-place."

Then he took a loaf of bread and a ham, and returned to his hiding-place.



When Mademoiselle de Verneuil walked forth into the fields, she felt as if she were born again ; the fresh morning air refreshed her cheeks which felt as if they had been exposed to a scorching atmosphere for many hours. She tried to find the path mentioned by the miser ; but since the moon had set, the darkness had become so intense that she was compelled to walk at random. Soon the fear of falling over a precipice assailed her heart and saved her life, for she stopped suddenly, having a presentiment that she would find nothing under her feet if she took another step. A cooler breeze blowing through her hair, the murmur of running water, and instinct, all combined to convince her that she was on the edge of the Saint-Sulpice cliffs. She put her arm about a tree and waited for the dawn in the keenest anxiety, for she could hear the clash of weapons, the neighing of horses and men's voices. She gave thanks to the darkness that preserved her from the danger of falling into the hands of the Chouans, if, as the miser had told her, they had surrounded Fougères.

Like bonfires lighted at night as an emblem of liberty, some gleams of light slightly tinged with purple came over the mountains, whose bases retained a

bluish tinge in striking contrast to the pink clouds floating over the valleys. Soon a ruby disk rose slowly above the horizon and the sky recognized it; the rocky eminences, the spire of Saint-Léonard's, the cliffs, the green fields buried in the shadow insensibly reappeared, and the trees upon the mountain tops were distinctly outlined in the growing light. The sun with a graceful bound shook off its ribbons of flame-color, ochre and sapphire. Its brilliant light spread in level lines from hill to hill and overflowed from valley to valley. The shadows vanished and day vanquished nature. A sharp breeze shivered in the air, the birds sang and everything awoke to renewed life. But the girl had hardly time to look down upon the details of the interesting landscape, when, by a not infrequent phenomenon in those well-watered regions, the mist arose in level sheets, filled the valleys, rose to the tops of the highest hills, buried that fertile basin beneath a snow-white cloak. In a moment it seemed to her as if she were looking at one of those *seas of ice* so plentiful in the Alps. Then the cloud-laden atmosphere began to move in waves like the ocean, impenetrable billows arose, swayed with a gentle, soothing motion or rushed violently to and fro, assuming in the sun's rays a bright pink color, and here and there as transparent as a lake of liquid silver. Suddenly the north wind blew upon this phantasmagoria and scattered the mists, which left a refreshing dew upon the greensward.

Thereupon Mademoiselle de Verneuil espied an im-

mense brown mass on the rock of Fougères. Seven or eight hundred Chouans under arms were moving about in Faubourg Saint-Sulpice like ants on an ant-hill. The neighborhood of the château, occupied by three thousand men who had arrived as if by magic, was attacked with great fury. The sleeping town would have succumbed despite its green earth-works and old gray towers, had not Hulot been wide awake. A masked battery on an eminence in the centre of the basin formed by the ramparts, answered the first fire of the Chouans, raking them with a slanting fire on the road to the château. The road was swept clean by the grape. Then a company marched out through Porte Saint-Sulpice, made the most of the surprise of the Chouans, drew up in battle order on the road, and opened a murderous fire on them. The Chouans did not try to resist when they saw that the ramparts of the château were covered with soldiers as if an expert in the engineering art had drawn blue lines thereon, and that the Republican sharpshooters were protected by the fire of the fortress.

Meanwhile, however, another party of Chouans, having made themselves masters of the little valley of Nançon, had climbed from gallery to gallery up the face of the cliff and reached the Promenade; in an instant it was covered with goatskins, which gave it the appearance of a thatched roof darkened by lapse of years. At the same moment, loud reports were heard in that part of the town that overlooks the valley of the Couësnon. Evidently Fougères,

being attacked on all sides, was entirely surrounded. The flames that broke out on the eastern side of the cliff showed that the Chouans were setting fire to the faubourgs. But the fire was soon extinguished on the roofs covered with thorn-broom or shingle, and some few columns of black smoke alone bore witness to it. Brown and white clouds once more shut out the scene from Mademoiselle de Verneuil's eyes, but the wind soon scattered the powdery haze. Already the Republican commandant had changed the direction of his battery so as to rake in turn the valley of the Nançon, the Queen's Stairway and the cliff, and from the height above the Promenade, he saw that his orders were wonderfully well executed. Two pieces stationed at Porte Saint-Léonard made havoc in the swarm of Chouans who had seized upon that position, while the National Guard of Fougères, marching in haste to the church square, completed the rout of the enemy. The battle lasted only half an hour and the Blues lost less than a hundred men. The Chouans, beaten and dispersed, were already retiring on all sides, in obedience to the repeated commands of the Gars, whose bold *coup de main* had failed, although he did not know it, as a result of the affair at La Vivetière, which had brought Hulot to Fougères so quickly and secretly. The artillery had only arrived during the night; for a mere hint of its proximity would have been enough to cause Montauran to abandon the undertaking which, if it were known beforehand, could not fail to end disastrously.



Hulot was as anxious to give the Gars a stern lesson as the Gars could have been to succeed in his enterprise, in order to influence the First Consul's determination. At the first cannon-shot therefore, the marquis realized that it would be sheer madness to go on, for the gratification of his self-esteem, with a surprise that was no surprise. And so, in order not to cause a useless slaughter of Chouans, he made haste to send seven or eight messengers with instructions to retreat at once all along the line. The commandant, having espied his opponent surrounded by a numerous circle of advisers, among whom was Madame du Gua, tried to send them a broadside where they stood on the cliffs of Saint-Sulpice ; but their position had been so shrewdly selected that the young leader was quite out of danger. Hulot changed his rôle and assumed the offensive instead of the defensive. At the first indications of the marquis's intentions, the company stationed under the walls of the château set out to cut off the retreat of the Chouans by taking possession of the upper exits from the valley of Nançon.

Despite her hatred, Mademoiselle de Verneuil espoused the cause of the men her lover commanded, and she turned quickly toward the other end of the valley to see if it were free ; but she saw a detachment of Blues, who had doubtless beaten off the assailants on the other side of the town, returning from the valley of Couësson, through the Val de Gibarry, to take possession of the *Nid-aux-Crocs*

and that portion of the cliffs of Saint-Sulpice that dominated the lower exits from the valley of Nançon. Thus the Chouans, confined in the narrow, level tract at the bottom of that gorge, seemed fated to die to the last man, so accurate were the old Republican's calculations and his measures so skilfully taken. But the cannon that had served Hulot so well could not be brought to bear on those two points and a desperate struggle ensued ; the town of Fougères being saved, the affair degenerated into one of those engagements to which the Chouans were accustomed.

Mademoiselle de Verneuil then understood the presence of the large bodies of men she had seen in the fields, the gathering of the chiefs at D'Orgemont's, and all the events of the night, but she could not understand how she had come safely through so many perils. This rash enterprise, dictated by despair, interested her so keenly that she stood motionless, gazing at the animated pictures presented to her eyes. Soon the battle that was in progress at the foot of the mountains of Saint-Sulpice, assumed fresh interest to her. When they saw that the Blues were almost victorious over the Chouans, the marquis and his friends hurried down into the valley of Nançon to bear aid to them. The ground at the foot of the cliffs was covered with a multitude of furious groups, who were deciding questions of life and death upon soil and with weapons that gave the goatskins the advantage. The shifting arena insensibly broadened in extent. The Chouans,

spreading out, climbed up the cliffs with the aid of the shrubs that grew here and there.

Mademoiselle de Verneuil was alarmed for a moment when, a little later, she saw her enemies once more upon the summit, where they defended with fierce vigor the dangerous paths which led thither. All the paths from the mountain being held by one or the other of the two forces, she was afraid of finding herself between them, so she left the great tree behind which she had taken shelter, and began to run, thinking that she would profit by the old miser's advice. After she had run for some time along that slope of the mountains of Saint-Sulpice that overlooks the broad valley of Couësnon, she saw a stable in the distance and concluded that it was an appendage of the residence of Galope-Chopine, who must have left his wife all alone during the battle. Encouraged by this conjecture, Mademoiselle de Verneuil hoped to be well received at the house in question and to be able to pass a few hours there until it should be possible for her to return without danger to Fougères. Judging from all appearances, Hulot would be victorious. The Chouans were flying so rapidly that she heard reports all about her, and the fear of being struck by a bullet lent her wings to reach the cottage whose chimney served her as a landmark. The path she had been following led to a sort of shed, the roof of which, covered with broom, was supported by four large trees with the bark still on. A mud wall formed the rear of the shed, under which were a

cider-press, a threshing-floor for buckwheat and divers farming tools. She leaned against one of the posts, hesitating to cross the expanse of mire that formed the yard of the house, which she, like a true Parisian, had taken for a stable, at a distance.

This hovel, sheltered from the north wind by a high bank which rose above the roof and against which the structure was built, did not lack elements of poesy, for some elm shoots, heather and cliff flowers crowned it with their garlands. A rustic staircase between the shed and the house enabled the occupants to go for a breath of fresh air to the top of the bank. To the left of the house the bank suddenly lowered, and disclosed a succession of fields, the first of which, doubtless, belonged to the farm. These fields were like lovely bowers, separated by banks of earth, thickly planted with trees, and the first of them bounded the farmyard on the fourth side. The road leading to the fields was blocked by a huge, half-rotten tree-trunk, a Breton method of closing roads, the name of which will be the subject hereafter of a digression that will put the finishing touch to the description of the province. Between the staircase cut in the slate and the path blocked by the great tree, facing the yard and under the hanging rock, some rough-hewn blocks of granite, placed one upon another, formed the four corners of the house and supported the wretched clay, the boards and loose stones of which the walls were built. The fact that half of the roof was covered with thorn-broom in guise of thatch, and the other

half with shingles, a sort of staves cut in the shape of slates, indicated that the house was divided into two parts ; in fact one portion, with a broken-down hurdle across the doorway, was used as a stable and the masters occupied the other.

Although this hovel owed to its proximity to the town some improvements that were entirely unknown two leagues farther away, it was a striking proof of the instability of the life in which constant wars and feudal customs had so completely ground down the morals of the serf, that to this day many peasants in those regions still call the château occupied by their lord a *demeure*. At last, while examining her surroundings with an amazement easily understood, Mademoiselle de Verneuil noticed here and there, in the mud of the yard, fragments of granite so arranged as to form a sort of causeway to the house,—a causeway that presented more than one source of danger, to be sure ; but when she heard the sound of the musketry coming perceptibly nearer, she leaped from stone to stone, as if she were crossing a brook, to ask shelter.

The house had one of those doors which consist of two separate parts, the lower being of solid wood, and the upper protected by a shutter which, when open, serves as a window. In some shops in certain small towns in France we see such doors at that, but much more ornate and provided with an alarm bell connected with the lower portion ; the one in question opened by means of a wooden latch worthy of the age of gold, and the upper part was closed only

during the night, for no light reached the living-room except through that opening. There was, to be sure, a rough sort of window, but the panes were like the bottoms of bottles, and the heavy bands of lead that kept them in place took up so much room that it seemed intended rather to intercept than to admit the light. When Mademoiselle de Verneuil made the door turn upon its shrieking hinges, she was conscious of an intensely disagreeable alkaline vapor coming out from the hut in great puffs, and she saw that the beasts had demolished the partition wall by kicking against it. Thus the interior of the farmhouse—for a farmhouse it was—did not belie the exterior. Mademoiselle de Verneuil was asking herself if it were possible that human beings could live in such unmitigated filth, when a little urchin in rags, apparently about eight or nine years of age, suddenly presented his fresh pink and white face, chubby cheeks, bright eyes, ivory teeth and a mass of fair hair that fell in matted locks over his bare shoulders; he was a strong-limbed little fellow and his attitude had that charming air of surprise, that startled curiosity that makes children's eyes grow larger. The little fellow was sublimely beautiful.

"Where is your mother?" said Marie in a gentle voice, stooping to kiss his eyes.

After receiving the kiss, the child glided away like an eel and disappeared behind a dungheap that lay on the slope of the bank between the path and the house. Like many Breton farmers, Galope-Chopine, following a system of agriculture which is

peculiar to them, placed his fertilizer on high ground, so that, by the time they are ready to use it, the rains have deprived it of all its good qualities. Being mistress of the house for a few moments, Marie quickly made an inventory of its contents. The room in which she awaited Barbette composed the whole house. The most prominent and most pretentious object was a huge fireplace, the *mantel* of which was made of a slab of blue granite. The etymology of this word was apparent in a piece of green serge with a border of pale green ribbon and rounded at the corners, hanging from the shelf, in the centre of which stood a Blessed Virgin in colored plaster. On the pedestal of the statue Mademoiselle de Verneuil read two lines of religious poetry very common in that neighborhood :

Je suis la Mère de Dieu,  
Protectrice de ce lieu.

Behind the Virgin a ghastly figure covered with red and blue spots, as a pretext for painting, represented Saint Labre. A bed, of the shape known as tent-beds, covered with green serge, a shapeless child's cradle, a spinning-wheel, rough chairs, a carved chest in which were some cooking utensils, formed the bulk of Galope-Chopine's furniture. In front of the window was a long chestnut table with two benches of the same wood, to which the dim light through the panes gave the dark color of old mahogany. An enormous cask of cider, under the spigot of which Mademoiselle de Verneuil



noticed a yellowish mud which was decomposing the floor, although it consisted of bits of granite laid in red clay, proved that the master of the house had not stolen his title of Chouan. Mademoiselle de Verneuil raised her eyes in search of some more agreeable spectacle, and thereupon it seemed to her as if she saw all the bats on earth, so innumerable were the spiders' webs hanging from the ceiling. Two enormous *pichets* full of cider stood on the long table. The *pichet* is a sort of jug of brown earthenware, examples of which may be found in several provinces of France ; a Parisian can form an idea of them by imagining the jars in which epicures serve Bretagne butter, with a more rounded body, varnished here and there and marked with yellow spots like certain shells. The jug ends in a sort of beak not unlike the head of a frog taking the air out of water. Marie finally fixed her attention upon the two *pichets*, but the sound of fighting suddenly becoming more distinct, forced her to seek a suitable place in which to hide without awaiting Barbette, when that lady suddenly appeared.

"Good-day, Bécanière," she said, restraining an involuntary smile at the aspect of a face which strongly resembled those that architects place as ornaments over windows.

"Ah ! you come from D'Orgemont," replied Barbette with little warmth.

"Where can you put me ? for here come the Chouans—"

"There !" said Barbette, as stupefied by the



beauty as by the strange garb of a creature whom she did not dare include among those of her own sex. "There! in the priest's hiding-place."

She led her to the foot of her bed and into the passageway between the bed and the wall, but they were thunderstruck when they heard what seemed to be a man bounding through the mud in the yard. Barbette had barely time to take a curtain from the bed and wrap Marie in it, before she found herself face to face with a fugitive Chouan.

"Where can I hide, old woman? I am the Comte de Bauvan."

Mademoiselle de Verneuil started as she recognized the voice of the guest, whose whispered words, the purport of which was unknown to her, had caused the catastrophe of La Vivetière.

"Alas! monseigneur, you see there's no chance here! The best thing I can do is to go outside and watch. If the Blues come, I'll give you warning. If I should stay here and they found me with you, they'd burn my house down."

And Barbette went out, for she had not sufficient intelligence to reconcile the interests of the two enemies who were equally entitled to shelter by virtue of the double rôle her husband was playing.

"I have two shots left," said the count in despair; "but they've already gone by. It would be very hard luck for me if they should take a fancy to look under the bed when they come back this way."

He noiselessly rested his gun against the bed post near which Marie was standing, wrapped in the

green serge, and stooped to look under the bed and make sure that he could hide there. He must inevitably have seen the other fugitive's feet, had not she, at that critical moment, seized the musket, jumped quickly out into the room and taken aim at the count; but he roared with laughter as he recognized her; for, to conceal herself more thoroughly, Marie had laid aside her huge Chouan hat and her hair was escaping in great bunches from under a sort of lace net.

"Don't laugh, count, you are my prisoner. If you move a finger, you will find out what an insulted woman is capable of."

While Marie and the count were gazing at each other with widely different emotions, they heard voices crying confusedly among the cliffs:

"Save the Gars! scatter! Save the Gars! spread out! spread out!"

Barbette's voice soared above the uproar without and was heard in the hovel by the two enemies with very different sensations, for she was speaking less to her son than to them.

"Don't you see the Blues?" she cried sharply. "Come here, you bad boy, or I'll come to you! Do you want them to fire their guns at you? Come, run away quick!"

While these trifling incidents, which succeeded one another very rapidly, were in progress, a Blue leaped into the yard.

"Beau-Pied!" cried Mademoiselle de Verneuil.

Beau-Pied ran to the house at the sound of that

voice and took aim at the count a little more accurately than his rescuer had done.

"Aristocrat," said the waggish soldier, "don't stir or I'll demolish you like the Bastille, in double quick time."

"Monsieur Beau-Pied," said Mademoiselle de Verneuil in a caressing tone, "you will be responsible to me for this prisoner. Do what you please with him, but you must turn him over to me, safe and sound, at Fougères."

"Very good, madame."

"Is the road to Fougères safe now?"

"It's safe unless the Chouans come to life again."

Mademoiselle de Verneuil gayly shouldered the light fowling-piece, smiled ironically as she said to her prisoner: "Adieu, Monsieur le comte, au revoir!" and darted out into the path after resuming her broad-brimmed hat.

"I learn a little too late," said the Comte de Bauvan bitterly, "that one must never trifle with the honor of women who have none."

"Aristocrat," cried Beau-Pied sternly, "if you don't want me to send you to your *ci-devant* paradise, don't say a word against that lovely woman!"

Mademoiselle de Verneuil returned to Fougères by the paths that connect the mountains of Saint-Sulpice with the *Nid-aux-Crocs*. When she reached that last named eminence and as she hurried along the winding road formed by the protuberances of the granite, she gazed in admiration at the pretty little valley of the Nançon, a few moments since so

filled with uproar and confusion, now perfectly tranquil. Seen from that point the valley resembled a street of verdure. Marie entered the town through Porte Saint-Léonard at which the little path ended. The inhabitants, still excited and anxious concerning the battle which, judging from the distant firing, seemed likely to last through the day, were awaiting the return of the National Guard to ascertain the extent of their losses. When they spied the girl in her strange costume, her hair in disorder, a gun in her hand, her shawl and dress soiled by rubbing against walls and by the mud, and wet with dew, the curiosity of the Fougerais was the more intense because the Parisian's power and beauty and eccentricity were already the principal subjects of conversation among them.

Francine, anxious beyond words, had sat up all night waiting for her mistress; and when she saw her once more, she attempted to speak, but a good-natured gesture imposed silence on her.

"I am not dead, my child," said Marie. "Ah! when I left Paris I longed for excitement—I have had it!" she added after a pause.

Francine was going to order breakfast, remarking that her mistress must be sorely in need of food.

"Oh! a bath, a bath!" said Marie. "A change of clothing first of all!"

Francine was surprised beyond measure when her mistress asked for the most modish garments she had brought with her. After breakfast, Marie made her toilet with the minute, painstaking care that a

woman expends upon that momentous operation when she expects to appear before one who is dear to her, in a ball-room. Francine could not understand her mistress's mocking gayety. It was not the joy of love—a woman never mistakes that expression—but it was concentrated mischief of evil augury. Marie herself arranged the curtains at the window from which a magnificent panorama was presented to the eye; then she went to the couch by the hearth, placed it in a light favorable to her face, and told Francine to procure some flowers in order to give the apartment a festal appearance. When Francine brought the flowers, Marie superintended their arrangement in the most picturesque way. When she had cast one last glance of satisfaction about the room, she bade Francine send to the commandant and demand her prisoner. She lay upon the couch in a voluptuous attitude, partly to rest, partly to display that combination of charm and weakness which is irresistible in certain women. A seductive languor, the alluring position of her feet, the toes being barely visible beneath the folds of her dress, the unconstrained pose of her body, the curve of her neck,—everything, even to the slender fingers of the hand that hung from her pillow like the bell-shaped flowers of a cluster of jasmine, combined with her glance to fascinate and charm. She burned perfumes in order to fill the air with those subtle odors that assail a man's fibres with such force, and often pave the way for triumphs which women seek to win without soliciting them. In a

few moments the old soldier's heavy step resounded in the salon that adjoined her bedroom.

"Well, commandant, where's my prisoner?"

"I have just given orders for a detail of twelve men to shoot him as one taken with arms in his hand."

"You have disposed of my prisoner!" she exclaimed. "Look you, commandant; the death of a man, after the battle, can't give you any great satisfaction, if I may judge by your face. Very well, turn the Chouan over to me, and grant him a reprieve for which I will take the responsibility. I give you my word that the aristocrat has become very essential to me and will assist materially in carrying out our plans. Furthermore, to shoot this amateur in Chouannerie would be as absurd as to fire on a balloon when only a pin prick is needed to let the air out. For God's sake, leave acts of cruelty to the aristocrats, Republics ought to be generous. Wouldn't you have pardoned the victims of Quiberon and very many others? Come, send your twelve men to do patrol duty and dine with me and my prisoner. There's only an hour of daylight left, and if you delay," she added with a smile, "my toilet will fail of its effect, you see."

"But, mademoiselle—" said the commandant, in surprise.

"Well, what is it? I understand you. Believe me, the count shall not escape you. Sooner or later the fat moth will come and burn his wings in the fire of your detachment."

The commandant shrugged his shoulders slightly like a man compelled to obey a pretty woman's wishes whatever may happen, and half an hour later he returned, accompanied by the Comte de Bauvan.

Mademoiselle de Verneuil pretended to be surprised by the arrival of her two guests and seemed confused to have been seen by the count lying down and in such a negligent attitude ; but, having read in the nobleman's eyes that the first effect she desired had been produced, she rose and devoted herself to entertaining them with perfect grace and courtesy. There was nothing studied or forced in her attitudes, her smile, her bearing or her voice, nothing to betray her premeditation or her designs. Everything was in harmony with everything else, and no too prominent detail afforded a reason for thinking that she was affecting the manners of a society in which she had not lived. When the Royalist and the Republican were seated, she looked at the count with a stern expression. That gentleman knew enough of women to know that the outrage he had inflicted upon the woman before him, would be his death warrant. Despite that thought, without being either gay or melancholy, he assumed the air of a man who did not anticipate such a sudden close to his career. Soon it seemed to him that it was absurd to be afraid of death in the presence of a pretty woman. In fact, Marie's stern expression put *ideas* into his head.

"Eh ! who knows," he thought, "whether a

count's coronet in hand won't please her better than a marquis's coronet out of her reach? Montauran is as thin as a nail, and I—"

He glanced at his figure with a satisfied air.

"Now, the least I can do is to save my head."

These diplomatic reflections were quite thrown away. The passion for Mademoiselle de Verneuil that the count determined to feign, became a violent reality which that dangerous creature amused herself by feeding.

"Monsieur le comte," said she, "you are my prisoner and I have a right to dispose of you as I please. Your execution will not take place without my consent;—now, I have too much curiosity about you to allow you to be shot just yet."

"And suppose I should persist in holding my tongue?" he replied gayly.

"With a virtuous woman, perhaps, but with a girl from the streets! nonsense, monsieur, impossible!"

These words, overflowing with bitter sarcasm, were hissed from such a sharp beak, as Sully says speaking of the Duchesse de Beaufort, that the astounded nobleman contented himself by looking his pitiless antagonist in the face.

"Come," she continued mockingly, "in order not to give you the lie, I propose to act like one of those creatures, a *bonne fille*! In the first place, here's your gun."

And she handed him the weapon with a gently ironical gesture.



“On my word as a gentleman, mademoiselle, you act—”

“Ah!” she exclaimed, interrupting him, “I’ve had enough of the word of a gentleman! I entered La Vivetière on the word of a gentleman. Your leader swore to me that I and my people should be safe there.”

“What an infamous thing!” cried Hulot with a frown.

“The fault was monsieur le comte’s,” she said to Hulot, pointing to Bauvan. “Certainly the Gars intended to keep his word; but monsieur here circulated some slanderous report or other about me which confirmed all that it had pleased *Charette’s Mare* to imagine—”

“Mademoiselle,” said the count in confusion, “if my head were under the axe, I would swear that I said nothing but the truth—”

“Which was?”

“That you had been the—”

“Say the word, the mistress—”

“Of the marquis, now Duc de Lenoncourt, one of my friends,” replied the count.

“Now I might well allow you to go to your punishment,” said Marie, apparently unmoved by the charge conscientiously brought against her by the count, who was stupefied by her real or pretended indifference to the reproach. “But,” she continued with a laugh, “put aside forever the sinister picture of those bits of lead, for you have not insulted me more bitterly than that friend of yours of whom you

will have it that I was—for shame.—Tell me, monsieur le comte, haven't you been at my father's house, the Duc de Verneuil's ? Well ? ”

Considering doubtless that Hulot was not a suitable recipient of so important a confidence as that she had to make, Mademoiselle de Verneuil beckoned the count to her side and whispered a few words in his ear. Monsieur de Bauvan gave vent to an exclamation of amazement, and gazed with a bewildered air at Marie, who suddenly put the finishing touch to the memory she had evoked by leaning against the mantel in the innocent and artless attitude of a child. The count bent his knee.

“Mademoiselle,” he cried, “I beg you to grant me your forgiveness, however unworthy I may be to receive it.”

“I have nothing to forgive,” she said. “You are no nearer the truth now in your repentance than in your insolent supposition at La Vivetière. But these mysteries are above your intelligence. But remember, monsieur le comte,” she added gravely, “that the Duc de Verneuil's daughter has too elevated a mind not to be deeply interested in you.”

“Even after an insult ? ” said the count regretfully.

“Do not certain persons occupy too exalted a position for slander to reach them ? I am of that number, monsieur le comte ! ”

As she uttered the words, the girl assumed a noble, haughty demeanor which made a deep impression on the prisoner and rendered the whole

intrigue much less clear to Hulot. He put his hand to his moustache as if to twist it and glanced uneasily at Mademoiselle de Verneuil, who made a sign of intelligence, as if to say that she was not departing from her plan.

“Now,” she continued after a pause, “let us talk—Francine, bring lights, my girl.”

She very cleverly led the conversation to the time which had, in so few years, come to be known as the *old régime*. She carried the count back to that period so completely by the vivacity of her remarks and the pictures she drew, she gave him so many opportunities to display his wit, by the obliging skill with which she laid herself open to repartee, that the count finally made up his mind that he had never been so fascinating ; and as that idea seemed to renew his youth, he tried to make his seductive companion share his good opinion of himself. The mischievous girl amused herself by bringing all her powers of coquetry to bear upon the count, and she was able to display the more address in that direction because it was mere sport to her. Thus, at one moment, she allowed him to believe that he was making rapid progress, and again, as if amazed at the keenness of her sensations, she exhibited a coldness which delighted the count and served insensibly to inflame his impromptu passion. She strongly resembled a fisherman who hauls in his line from time to time to see if the fish are nibbling at the bait. The poor count allowed himself to be taken in by the artless way in which his

rescuer accepted two or three well-turned compliments. The emigration, the Republic, Bretagne and the Chouans were a thousand leagues from his thoughts. Hulot sat bolt upright in his chair, impassive and thoughtful, like the god Terminus. His lack of education made him altogether unfitted for that kind of conversation, he had an idea that his two companions were very clever and witty ; but all the powers of his intellect were concentrated in the effort to understand them, in order to ascertain whether they were plotting secretly against the Republic.

“Montauran, mademoiselle,” said the count, “is well-born and well-bred, a pretty fellow ; but he knows nothing of the art of gallantry. He is too young to have seen Versailles. His education has been neglected, and instead of repeating slanders, he will deal blows with his dagger. He may love violently, but he will never have that refined, flowery manner that distinguished Lauzun, Adhémar, Coigny and so many others ! He hasn’t the attractive faculty of saying to women the pretty nothings that please them better after all than those fiery outbursts of passion by which they are soon fatigued. Yes, although he may be a favorite with the sex, he has neither the ease of manner nor the grace that is requisite.”

“I have noticed that about him,” replied Marie.

“Ah !” said the count to himself, “the inflection of her voice and her glance prove that it won’t be long before I am on the *best of terms* with her ; and,

faith, to belong to her, I'll believe whatever she wants me to believe."

He offered his hand as dinner was served. Made-moiselle de Verneuil did the honors of the repast with a courtesy and tact that could have been acquired only by education and in the refined existence of the court.

"Do you go away," she said to Hulot, as they left the table; "you would frighten him, whereas, if I am alone with him, I shall soon learn all that I need to know; he is at the point at which a man tells me all he thinks, and sees only with my eyes."

"And afterward?" queried the commandant, as if he proposed to claim the prisoner.

"Oh!" she replied, "he will be as free as air."

"But he was taken with arms in his hand—"

"No," she said, resorting to one of the sophistical jests with which women delight to oppose a peremptory argument, "I had disarmed him,—Count," she said to the nobleman, returning to the room, "I have just obtained your liberty; but not for nothing," she added with a smile, putting her head on one side as if to question him.

"Ask me for everything, even my name and my honor!" he cried in his excitement, "I lay all at your feet."

He rushed forward to seize her hand, trying to make her take his passion for an outburst of gratitude; but she was not a child to be so deceived.

And so, smiling in such a way as to inspire hope in her new lover, she said:

“Do you propose to make me regret my confidence?” and she recoiled a few steps.

“A girl’s imagination moves more quickly than a woman’s,” he replied, laughing.

“A girl has more to lose than a woman.”

“True, one should be suspicious when one carries a treasure.”

“Let us have done with this nonsense,” she rejoined, “and talk seriously. You are to give a ball at Saint-James. I have heard it said that you had established your base of supplies, your arsenals and your seat of government there. When is the ball?”

“To-morrow evening.”

“You will not be surprised, monsieur, to learn that a slandered woman desires, with a woman’s obstinacy, to obtain a notorious satisfaction for the insults she has undergone, in the presence of those who witnessed them. Therefore, I shall go to your ball. I ask you to grant me your protection from the moment that I appear there until I take my leave. I don’t want your word,” she said, as she saw him lay his hand on his heart. “I abhor oaths, they seem too much like precautionary measures. Tell me simply that you promise to protect my person from any criminal or degrading attack. Promise to repair the wrong you did me, by announcing that I am really the Duc de Verneuil’s daughter, and by saying nothing as to all the miseries I owe to the lack of a father’s protection; then we shall be quits. Is two hours’ protection bestowed upon a woman at

a ball too dear a ransom? Nonsense, you're not worth an obolus more."

With a smile she deprived her words of all bitterness.

"What will you ask for my gun?" said the count with a laugh.

"Oh! more than for you."

"What?"

"The secret. Believe me, Bauvan, a woman can be fathomed only by a woman. I am certain that, if you say a word, I may die on the road. Yesterday, I was warned by a musket ball of the dangers I run on the highways. Oh! that lady is as clever at hunting as she is quick at the toilet. No lady's-maid ever undressed me so quickly. In pity's name," she said, "see to it that I have nothing of that sort to fear at the ball."

"You will be under my protection there," replied the count proudly. "But will you come to Saint-James for Montauran's sake?" he asked with a melancholy air.

"You want to know more than I do myself," she laughed. "Now, go," she added after a pause. "I am going to escort you out of the town myself, for you fight here like cannibals."

"Then you do take a little interest in me?" cried the count. "Ah! mademoiselle, permit me to hope that you will not be indifferent to my friendship; for I must content myself with that sentiment, I suppose?" he added fatuously.

"Go to, sorcerer!" she said, with the happy ex-

pression a woman assumes to make an avowal that compromises neither her dignity nor her secret.

Then she put on a cloak and accompanied the count as far as the *Nid-aux-Crocs*. When they reached the end of the path, she said to him :

“Monsieur, be absolutely close-mouthed, even with the marquis.”

And she put her finger to her lips.

The count, emboldened by her kindly manner, took her hand ; she allowed him to do it as a great favor and he kissed it passionately.

“Oh ! mademoiselle, rely on me in life or in death !” he cried, when he found himself out of danger. “Although the debt of gratitude I owe you is almost equal to that which I owe my mother, it will be very hard for me to look upon you with no warmer feeling than respect.”

He darted into the path ; after watching him on his way up the cliffs of Saint-Sulpice, Marie nodded her head contentedly and muttered to herself :

“My stout friend has given me more than his life for his life ! I will make him my creature at small cost ! A creature or a creator, that is all the difference there is between one man and another.”

She said no more but glanced despairingly upward and slowly retraced her steps to Porte Saint-Léonard, where Hulot and Corentin awaited her.

“Two days more,” she cried, “and—”

She checked herself when she saw that they were not alone.



“And he will fall under your muskets!” she added in Hulot’s ear.

The commandant fell back a step and gazed with a cunning expression, difficult of interpretation, at the girl, whose manner and features betrayed no remorse. There is this noteworthy fact about women, that they never reflect about their most reprehensible acts, sentiment draws them on; they are natural even in their dissimulation, and in them alone do we find crime without baseness; most of the time, *they do not know how it came to pass*.

“I am going to Saint-James, to the ball given by the Chouans, and—”

“But it’s five leagues from here,” interposed Corentin; “do you want me to go with you?”

“You are much engrossed,” she retorted, “with something to which I never give a thought—yourself.”

The contempt with which Marie treated Corentin was particularly pleasing to Hulot, who made his characteristic grimace as he watched her disappear in the direction of Saint-Léonard; Corentin followed her with his eyes, allowing his face to manifest a sly consciousness of the fatal influence that he believed he was able to exert over the charming creature, by putting a curb upon her passions, on which he relied to find her some day in his power.





Mademoiselle de Verneuil, once more in her apartments, devoted herself to the question of ball costumes. Francine, who was accustomed to obey her mistress without ever understanding her purposes, looked over the boxes and suggested a Grecian costume. In those days, everything was Greek. The costume that Marie decided upon could be placed in a box that was easily carried in the hand.

“Francine, my child, I am going to take a little excursion ; tell me whether you prefer to stay here or go with me.”

“Stay here !” cried Francine ; “why, who would dress you ?”

“Where did you put the glove I gave you this morning ?”

“Here it is.”

“Sew a green ribbon on it ; and be sure to take some money.”

Seeing that Francine had some newly coined pieces, she cried :

“That’s all we need to make them murder us ! Send Jérémie to wake Corentin.—No, the wretch would follow us ! Send rather to the commandant, and ask him from me for some double crowns.”

With the true feminine sagacity that gives thought

to the most trifling details, Marie neglected nothing. While Francine was completing the preparations for her inexplicable departure, she set about trying to counterfeit the cry of the screech-owl, and succeeded in imitating Marche-à-Terre's signal so well that the deception was perfect. At midnight she left the town by Porte Saint-Léonard, climbed the narrow path to the *Nid-aux-Crocs*, accompanied by Francine, and started across the Val de Gibarry, walking with a firm step, for she was inspired by the strong will that gives an indefinable suggestion of power to the gait and to the whole body. To leave a ball-room so wrapped up as to avoid taking cold is an important matter to a woman ; but let her have a passion in her heart and her body becomes bronze. A daring man would have hesitated long before embarking upon that undertaking, but Mademoiselle de Verneuil had no sooner conceived the idea than its dangers became so many enticements.

"You are starting without commending your soul to God," said Francine, who had turned to look back at the bell-tower of Saint-Léonard.

The pious Breton girl stopped, clasped her hands and said an *Ave* to Sainte Anne d'Auray, imploring her that the journey might have a happy ending, while her mistress stood pensively by, observing the artless attitude of her maid as she prayed fervently, and the effects of the misty light of the moon, which, as it streamed through the openings in the walls of the church, gave to the granite the light and airy appearance of filigree work. The two travellers

soon reached Galope-Chopine's hut. Light as their steps were, they awoke one of the great dogs to whose fidelity the Bretons entrust the keeping of the simple wooden latch that secures their doors. The dog ran toward the two strangers and his barking became so threatening that they were compelled to call for help, retreating a few steps. But nothing stirred. Mademoiselle gave the screech-owl's cry, instantly the rusty hinges of the door creaked shrilly and Galope-Chopine, who had risen in haste, showed his forbidding countenance.

"I must go at once to Saint-James," said Marie, presenting the Marquis de Montauran's glove to the *surveillant* of Fougères. "Monsieur le Comte de Bauvan told me that you would guide me there and protect me. So procure us two donkeys to ride, my dear Galope-Chopine, and prepare to go with us. Time is precious, for if we don't arrive at Saint-James before to-morrow night, we shall see neither the Gars nor the ball."

Galope-Chopine in his bewilderment took the glove, turned it over and over and lighted a pitch candle, of the size of one's little finger and of the color of gingerbread. That article of merchandise, imported into Bretagne from the north of Europe, betrays, like everything one sees in that strange country, utter ignorance of all commercial principles, even those most widely known. After he had examined the green ribbon, scrutinized Mademoiselle de Verneuil, scratched his ear and drunk a *pichet* of cider, of which he offered his fair guest a glass,

Galope-Chopine left her sitting by the table on the bench of polished chestnut, and went out to find two donkeys. The violet light shed by the imported candle was not strong enough to drown the capricious rays of the moon, which dotted with luminous points the dark tones of the floor and furniture of the smoke-begrimed hovel. The little boy had raised his pretty wondering face, and above his fair hair two cows showed their pink noses and their large bright eyes through the holes in the wall of the stable. The great dog, whose face was not the least intelligent one in the family, seemed to examine the two strangers with as much curiosity as the child displayed. A painter would have gazed long and admiringly at the light and shade effects in the picture ; but, having little desire to enter into conversation with Barbette, who sat up in bed like a spectre and was beginning to open her eyes to their fullest extent as she recognized her, Marie went out of doors to avoid the pestilential air in the hovel and the questions La Bécanière was certain to ask her.

She ran quickly up the staircase cut in the rock that sheltered Galope-Chopine's abode, and feasted her eyes upon the details of the landscape, whose aspect changed with every step she took, forward or back, toward the summits of the cliffs or down into the valleys. The moonlight enveloped the valley of Couësson as in a luminous mist. Surely a woman who bore in her heart a slighted love must enjoy the melancholy that that soft light arouses in

the soul, by the fantastic aspects it imparts to common objects and by the colors with which it streaks the waters.

At that moment the silence was broken by the braying of donkeys ; Marie speedily returned to the Chouan's cabin, and they started at once. Galope-Chopine, armed with a double-barreled fowling-piece, wore a long goatskin garment that made him look like Robinson Crusoe. His blotched and wrinkled face could hardly be seen under the broad-brimmed hat that the peasants still retain as a tradition of the olden time, proud of having won during their servitude the former ornament of lordly heads. This nocturnal procession, under the protection of a guide in whose costume, attitude and features there was something patriarchal, resembled the scene from the Flight into Egypt as depicted by Rembrandt's sombre brush. Galope-Chopine carefully avoided the main road and guided the strangers through the vast labyrinth of crossroads which intersect Bretagne in every direction.

Mademoiselle de Verneuil thereupon realized the nature of the war waged by the Chouans. As she rode through those roads, she obtained a better appreciation of the condition of the country, which, looked at from above, had seemed so ravishingly beautiful, but which one must see near at hand to form any conception of its dangers and insurmountable difficulties. Around each field the peasants, untold ages ago, built walls of earth, six feet high and of prismatic shape with chestnuts, oaks or ash

trees growing along the top. These walls, thus planted, are called *hedges*—the Norman variety of hedge—and the long branches of the trees growing upon them almost always overshadow the road, forming an immense bower above it. The roads, shut in between these walls built of clayey soil, resemble the moats of walled towns, and when the granite, which in those regions is almost always very near the surface, does not form a sort of rough pavement for them, they become practically impassable, so that the smallest cart cannot be drawn by less than two pairs of oxen and two small, but generally strong and hardy horses. The roads are so universally boggy, that it has been found absolutely necessary to make paths for foot-passengers, in the fields and along the hedges; these paths, called *rotes*, begin and end with each division of the land. To pass from one field to another, one must climb over the hedge by means of several steps, which the rain often makes very slippery.

Our travellers had many other obstacles to overcome in those winding roads. Each bit of land, protected as we have described, has its entrance, about ten feet wide, closed by what is called in the West an *échalier*. The *échalier* is a trunk or a large branch of a tree, one end of which, pierced from side to side, is set in another shapeless mass of wood, which acts as a pivot. The end of the *échalier* extends a little beyond the pivot, so as to receive a weight sufficiently heavy to serve as a counterpoise, thus enabling a child to handle this odd rustic gateway, the



other end of which rests in a hole made on the inner side of the hedge. Sometimes the peasants avoid the necessity of wasting a stone as a counterpoise by allowing the large end of the tree-trunk or branch to extend far enough beyond the pivot to balance the weight of the other end. This form of gateway varies according to the inventive genius of each landowner. Often the *échalier* consists of a single branch of a tree of which both ends are secured in the earthen hedge. Often it has the appearance of a square gate composed of several small branches placed at equal distances apart, like the rungs of a ladder lying on its side. In such cases the gate turns like an *échalier*, and revolves at the other end on a little solid wheel. These hedges and *échaliers* give the country the aspect of a vast checker-board, each field forming a square entirely separate from the others, enclosed like a fortress and like it protected by ramparts. The gate, easily defended, offers the assailant the most perilous of all conquests. Indeed the Breton peasant believes that he enriches the fallow-land by encouraging the growth of enormous broom plants, a shrub so well treated in those regions, that it speedily grows to the height of a man. This prejudice, worthy of people who pile their manure in the highest part of their yards, has this result: that about one field in four is occupied by forests of broom which furnish facilities for innumerable ambushes. Lastly, it is doubtful if there is a single field without a few old cider-apple trees, whose branches hang very low and are consequently fatal

to the productiveness of the ground beneath them ; now, if you think for a moment of the small extent of the fields, whose walls all support huge trees with greedy roots that monopolize a fourth of the soil, you will have an idea of the appearance and state of cultivation of the region *Mademoiselle de Verneuil* was at that time traversing.

It is impossible to say whether the desire to avoid disputes as to the ownership of the fields or the custom so dear to the indolent of shutting up cattle without having to watch them, has had more to do with the construction of these formidable enclosures, whose permanent obstacles make the country impenetrable and warfare between large bodies of troops impossible. When one has analyzed this disposition of the country, step by step, one fully understands the necessary ill-success of a conflict between regular troops and partisans ; for five hundred men can defy all the troops of a kingdom. Therein lay the whole secret of the Chouan wars. *Mademoiselle de Verneuil* saw at once why it was necessary for the Republic to strangle the insurrection by police methods and diplomacy rather than by the fruitless employment of military force. For what was to be done against people who were adroit enough to care nothing for the possession of towns and to make sure of these fields with impregnable fortifications ? How avoid negotiation, when the whole strength of these misguided peasants resided in a shrewd and enterprising leader ? She admired the genius of the minister, who sitting in his office,

divined the true secret of peace. She fancied that she could understand the considerations that influence men who have the power to embrace a whole empire at a glance, and whose actions, criminal in the eyes of the vulgar, are simply the play of a far-reaching thought. In such awe-inspiring minds, there is a sort of partition between the power of fatality and the power of destiny, an indescribable prescience whose signs suddenly lift them up above their fellows; the common herd looks for them a moment in its own midst, it raises its eyes and sees them soaring far above. These thoughts seemed to justify and even to ennoble the longing for vengeance conceived by Mademoiselle de Verneuil; the travail of her mind and her hopes imparted sufficient energy to enable her to endure the unaccustomed fatigue of her journey.

At the end of every field, Galope-Chopine was compelled to make the travellers alight so that he might help them to cross the difficult places, and when the *rotes* came to an end, they were obliged to resume their donkeys and take to the miry roads, which gave token of the approach of winter. The combination of great trees, sunken roads and walls, produced in the lowlands a cloud of moisture that often enveloped the three travellers in a cloak of ice. After a painfully fatiguing journey, they reached the forest of Marignay just at sunrise. In the broad path through the woods, travelling was less difficult. The arch formed by the branches, the density of the foliage sheltered the travellers from the inclemency

of the weather, and the multiplied difficulties they had had to overcome at first were not renewed.

They had ridden hardly a league through the woods when they heard in the distance a confused murmur of voices and the tinkling of a bell, whose silvery tones had not the monotonous sound made by cattle walking. As they rode along, Galope-Chopine listened to the melody with much attention, and soon a puff of wind brought to his ears a few chanted words which seemed to make a deep impression upon him, for he turned the tired animals into a path that led away from the Saint-James road, turning a deaf ear to the remonstrances of Mademoiselle de Verneuil, whose apprehension increased by reason of the uninviting character of their surroundings. On each hand were enormous granite boulders, piled one upon another in such a way as to form strange figures. Between the boulders, immense roots like huge snakes glided away to seek at a distance nourishing juices for divers venerable beeches. Both sides of the road resembled subterranean grottoes, worthy of note for their wonderful stalactites. Enormous festoons of rock, where the dark green of the holly and the fern was mingled with blotches of green and white moss, concealed high precipices and the mouths of deep caverns. When the three travellers had taken a few steps along a narrow path, the most astonishing of spectacles was suddenly presented to Mademoiselle de Verneuil's eyes, and satisfactorily explained Galope-Chopine's obstinacy.

A semi-circular basin, composed entirely of blocks of granite, formed an amphitheatre from whose unhewn steps, tall black yews and yellowing chestnuts arose one above another, presenting the aspect of a great circus, whereon the winter sun seemed rather to cast a few pale beams than to shed its light, while the autumn had strewn everywhere its yellow carpet of withered leaves. In the centre of this vast hall, which seemed to have had the Deluge for architect, rose three huge druidical stones, a mammoth altar upon which was fixed an ancient banner of the church. A hundred or more men, kneeling and bareheaded, were praying fervently in that enclosure, where a priest, assisted by two other ecclesiastics, was saying mass. The shabbiness of the priestly garments, the priest's feeble voice, which sounded like a mere murmur, those kneeling men abounding in conviction, united by a single sentiment and prostrate before an unadorned altar, the nakedness of the crucifix, the rural wildness of the temple, the hour, the place—everything combined to impart to the scene the simplicity characteristic of the early days of Christianity.

Mademoiselle de Verneuil was profoundly impressed. This mass said in the depths of the forest, this worship driven back by persecution to its source, the poesy of ancient times boldly renewed amid such strange and capricious natural surroundings; these Chouans, armed and disarmed, cruel and praying, children and men at once,—all

this resembled nothing that she had ever seen or imagined. She remembered how she had wondered in her childhood at the pomp and parade of the Romish church, which appeal so strongly to the senses ; but she did not as yet know God by Himself, His cross upon the altar, His altar on the bare ground ; instead of the fanciful leaves that crown the gothic arches in cathedrals, the trees of autumn upholding the vast dome of heaven ; instead of the thousand colored beams projected by the stained glass windows, the sun just intruding its reddish rays and dark shadows on the altar, on the priest and on the worshippers. There, men were simply a fact and not a theory, it was a prayer and not a religion. But human passions, whose momentary repression made the picture harmonious throughout, soon intruded themselves upon that mysterious scene and enlivened it immensely.

When Mademoiselle de Verneuil arrived, the priest was just finishing the gospel. In him she recognized, not without alarm, Père Gudin, and she hastily moved out of sight, taking advantage of the proximity of an immense block of granite which made a convenient hiding-place for her, and drawing Francine after her ; but she tried in vain to move Galope-Chopine from the place he had selected to participate in the benefits of that ceremony. She hoped that she might be able to escape the danger that threatened her, when she observed that the lay of the land made it possible for her to leave the place before any of the congregation. Through a

broad fissure in the rock she saw Abbé Gudin ascend a block of granite that served him as a pulpit, and he began his sermon in these words: "*In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.*"

With that, all those present reverently crossed themselves.

"My dear brethren," the abbé continued in a loud voice, "we will pray first of all for the departed: Jean Cohegrue, Nicolas Laferté, Joseph Brouet, François Parquoi, Sulpice Coupiau, all of this parish, who died of wounds received at the battle of La Pèlerine and the siege of Fougères. *De profundis*, etc."

The psalm was recited, as the custom is, by the congregation and priests, each repeating a verse in turn with a fervor that augured well for the success of the sermon. When the psalm for the dead was concluded, Abbé Gudin began in a voice that rose constantly higher and higher; for the former Jesuit well knew that a vehement delivery was the most powerful of arguments with which to influence uncivilized auditors.

"Those defenders of God, Christians, have set you an example of fidelity to duty," he said. "Are not you ashamed to think of what they may say of you in Paradise? Except for those blessed ones who have been received with open arms by all the saints, Our Lord might believe that your parish is settled by Mohammedans! Do you know, my gars, what they say of you in Bretagne and in the king's circle? You don't know, eh? Well, I will tell



you: 'Why! the Blues have overthrown the altars, they have killed the priests, they have murdered the king and queen, they seek to take all the Church's children in Bretagne to make Blues of them and send them to fight outside their parishes, in very distant countries where they run the risk of dying unconfessed and so going down into hell for all eternity; and the gars of Marignay, whose church they have burned, stand with their arms hanging at their sides! Oho! that damned Republic has sold God's property and that of the great nobles at public auction, it has divided the price among its Blues; and then, to feed on money as it feeds on blood, it has decreed that three livres shall be taken from the crown of six livres, just as it takes three men out of every six; and the gars of Marignay have not taken down their muskets to drive the Blues out of Bretagne! Aha! Paradise will be closed to them and they can never obtain salvation—' That's what they say about you. And so it is your salvation, Christians, that is at stake. You will save your souls by fighting for the religion and the king. Sainte Anne d'Auray herself appeared to me on the day before yesterday at half-past two. She said to me these very words: 'You are a priest at Marignay?'—'Yes, madame, at your service.'—'Well, I am Sainte Anne d'Auray, God's aunt, *à la mode de Bretagne*. I am still at Auray; and I have come here to bid you tell the gars of Marignay that they have no hope of salvation unless they take up arms. So you will refuse to give them absolution for their



sins unless they serve God. You will bless their guns, and the gars who are without sin will not miss the Blues because their guns will be consecrated !' —She disappeared, leaving an odor of incense under the Patte-d'Oie oak. I noticed the place. A beautiful wooden Virgin has been placed there by the rector of Saint-James. Now, the mother of Pierre Leroi, called Marche-à-Terre, went there to pray at night and was cured of her pains because of her son's good works. She is there among you and you see that she walks all alone. It is a miracle, performed, like the resurrection of the blessed Marie Lambrequin, to prove to you that God will never abandon the cause of the Bretons while they fight for his servants and for the king. And so, my dear brethren, if you wish to obtain salvation and to show yourselves true defenders of the king, our lord, you must obey whatever orders you may receive from the man the king has sent to you, whom we call the Gars. Then you will no longer be like Mohammedans, and you will find yourselves, with all the gars of all Bretagne, under God's banner. You can take from the pockets of the Blues all the money they have stolen ; for if your fields are not tilled while you are fighting, the Lord and the king will turn over your enemies' property to you. Would you have it said, Christians, that the gars of Marignay are behind the gars of Morbihan, Saint-Georges, Vitré and Antrain, who are all in God's service and the king's ? Will you let them take everything ? Will you remain like heretics, with folded arms,

when so many Bretons are saving their souls and their king ? ‘ Forsake all and follow me ! ’ says the Gospel. Have not we priests already given up our tithes ? Forsake all, therefore, to take part in this holy war ! You will be like the Maccabees. Everything will be forgiven. You will find your rectors and their curés fighting among you, and you will triumph ! Mark this, Christians ! ” he said in conclusion : “ for to-day only we have the power to bless your guns. They who do not take advantage of that privilege, will find the saint of Auray no longer so compassionate, and she won’t listen to them as she did in the former war.”

This discourse, delivered in trumpet-like tones and accompanied by constant gesticulation which caused the perspiration to flow from every pore, apparently produced little effect. The peasants stood like statues, with their eyes fixed on the orator ; but Mademoiselle de Verneuil soon noticed that that attitude was the result of a spell cast upon the assemblage by the abbé. He had, after the manner of great actors, swayed his whole audience like a single man, appealing to selfish interests and to passions. Had he not absolved them in advance for all their excesses, and unfastened the only bonds that held those ignorant men to the observance of the precepts of religion and society ? He had prostituted the priesthood to political interests ; but in those times of revolution, every man made a weapon of whatever he possessed, for the benefit of his party, and the pacific Cross of Jesus became an

instrument of warfare no less than the ploughshare. Having no one with whom she could advise, Mademoiselle de Verneuil turned to look at Francine, and was surprised in no slight degree to find that she was infected with the prevailing enthusiasm, for she was devoutly telling her beads on Galope-Chopine's rosary, which he had probably allowed her to take during the sermon.

"Francine," she said in an undertone, "are you afraid of becoming a Mohammedan?"

"Oh! mademoiselle," replied the Breton girl, "just see Pierre's mother down there, walking—"

Francine's attitude denoted such profound conviction, that Marie at once understood the secret of the sermon she had heard, the influence of the clergy in those country districts, and the momentous results of the scene that was just beginning. The peasants who were nearest the altar came forward one by one and knelt down, offering their guns to the preacher, who placed them on the altar. Galope-Chopine made haste to present his old fowling-piece. The three priests intoned the *Veni Creator*, while the celebrant enveloped the instruments of death in a cloud of bluish smoke, describing figures that seemed to interlace. When the wind had blown away the vapor of the incense, the guns were distributed to their owners. Each man knelt to receive his own from the hands of the priests, who recited a Latin prayer as they returned them. When the armed men returned to their places, the intense enthusiasm of the assemblage, thus far speechless,

burst forth in an awe-inspiring yet touching manner.

*Domine, salvum fac regem !*

Such was the prayer that the preacher intoned in a sonorous voice, and it was taken up and repeated twice with tremendous force. There was something wild and warlike in the cries. The two notes of the word *regem*, readily translated by the peasants, were attacked with such vigor that Mademoiselle de Verneuil could not refrain from thinking with emotion of the exiled Bourbon family. That thought awoke memories of her past life. Her mind reverted to the fêtes of that court, now scattered far and wide, at which she had been a brilliant figure. The marquiss's face intruded itself in her reverie. With the mobility characteristic of a woman's mind, she forgot the picture before her eyes and recurred to her schemes of vengeance, in which her life was at stake, but which might fade away before a glance from his eyes. As she thought of her desire to appear as beautiful as possible in that most critical moment of her existence, she remembered that she had no jewels to wear in her hair at the ball, and was charmed with the idea of making use of a branch of holly, whose shiny leaves and red berries caught her eye at that moment.

"Ah ! my gun may miss fire if I fire at birds, but at the Blues—never !" said Galope-Chopine, nodding his head as a sign of satisfaction.

Marie examined her guide's face more closely and found it a type of all those she had recently seen. The old Chouan certainly bore no indication of the

possession of as many ideas as a child might be expected to have. An expression of childish joy wrinkled his face and his brow when he looked at his gun ; but religious conviction imparted a tinge of fanaticism to his expression, and for a moment all the vices of civilization were displayed upon those uncivilized features. They soon reached a village—that is to say, a collection of four or five dwellings like Galope-Chopine's, where the newly recruited Chouans arrived just as Mademoiselle de Verneuil was finishing a repast of which bread, butter and milk were the principal ingredients. The straggling troop was led by the priest, who held in his hand a rough cross transformed into a flag, and was followed by a gars proud as a king to carry the banner of the parish. Mademoiselle de Verneuil had no choice but to join this detachment, which, like herself, was bound for Saint-James, and which would naturally protect her from danger of any sort after Galope-Chopine had committed the lucky indiscretion of informing the leader of the troop that the lovely *garce*, for whom he was acting as guide, was the Gars's good friend.

Toward sunset the travellers reached Saint-James, a small town that owes its name to the English, by whom it was built in the 14th century during their domination in Bretagne. Before entering the town, Mademoiselle de Verneuil witnessed a strange scene to which she did not pay much attention : she was afraid of being recognized by some of her enemies, and that fear made her quicken her pace. Five or

six thousand peasants were encamped in a field. Their costumes, not unlike those of the conscripts at La Pèlerine, excluded all idea of war. The tumultuous assemblage resembled rather a great fair. Indeed a careful scrutiny was required to discover that the men were armed, for their goat-skins, of diverse shapes, almost hid their guns, and the weapon most in evidence was the scythe with which some supplied the place of the guns that were to be distributed to them. Some were eating and drinking, others fighting or disputing loudly, but most of them were lying on the ground asleep. There was no appearance of order or discipline. An officer in a red uniform attracted Mademoiselle de Verneuil's attention ; she supposed that he was in the English service. Farther away two other officers seemed to be trying to teach some Chouans, more intelligent than the others, how to handle two pieces of cannon which seemed to compose all the artillery of the future Royalist army. Loud shouts greeted the arrival of the gars from Marignay, who were recognized by their banner.

Under cover of the commotion aroused in the camp by the new arrivals and the priests, Mademoiselle de Verneuil was able to make her way through it unharmed and to enter the town. She found an inn of poor appearance, not very far from the house where the ball was to be given. The town was so filled with people that she succeeded only with the utmost difficulty in securing a wretched little room. When she was installed therein and Galope-Chopine had

## FOR THE BALL AT SAINT-JAMES

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*When she had bestowed her approbation, with a smile, upon her headdress, whose most trifling details helped to bring out the beauties of her face, she placed upon her head the wreath of holly she had prepared, its numerous bunches of bright red berries repeating the color of the tunic most effectively in her hair.*









handed Francine the box containing her mistress's costume, he remained in the room in an indescribable attitude of suspense and irresolution. At any other moment, Mademoiselle de Verneuil would have been amused to see what a Breton peasant is like away from his parish ; but she broke the charm by taking from her purse four crowns of six francs which she handed him.

"Take this !" she said to Galope-Chopine ; "and, if you wish to oblige me, you will return at once to Fougères, without passing through the camp and without tasting the cider !"

The Chouan, astonished by such liberality, looked from the four crowns he had in his hand to Mademoiselle de Verneuil ; but she waved her hand to him and he disappeared.

"How can you send him away, mademoiselle ?" asked Francine. "Didn't you notice how the town is surrounded ? How shall we get away from it and who will protect you here ?"

"Haven't you your own protector ?" said Mademoiselle de Verneuil with a sly smile, whistling softly after the manner of Marche-à-Terre, whose attitude she tried to imitate.

Francine blushed and smiled sadly at her mistress's high spirits.

"But where is yours ?" she said.

Mademoiselle de Verneuil suddenly drew her dagger and showed it to the terrified Breton, who fell upon a chair and clasped her hands.

"Oh ! Marie, whom do you expect to find here ?"

she cried in an imploring voice which asked for no reply.

Mademoiselle de Verneuil was busily twisting the holly branches she had gathered.

"I don't know if this holly will look well in my hair," she said. "Only a face that is as highly colored as mine could stand so sombre a headdress ; what do you think of it, Francine ?"

Several similar remarks while this extraordinary young woman was dressing, indicated the greatest self-possession. Anyone listening to her would have found it difficult to believe that a most momentous crisis was approaching in which her life was the stake. A dress of Indian muslin, rather short, and clinging like damp linen, revealed the delicate outlines of her figure ; then she donned a red garment, whose numerous folds, gradually lengthening as they fell by her side, showed the graceful curves of the Grecian tunic. That voluptuous garment of the Pagan priestesses softened somewhat the immodesty of the costume, which the fashions of that time permitted women to wear. To soften it still more, Marie covered with a gauze veil her white shoulders, which the tunic left too much exposed. She twisted her long locks in such a way as to form behind her head the truncated cone which imparts such grace to the shape of some ancient statues by the artificial lengthening of the head, and some few curls fell on each side of her face in long glossy ringlets. Thus arrayed, her head thus adorned, she presented a striking resemblance to the most famous

masterpieces of Greek sculpture. When she had bestowed her approbation, with a smile, upon her headdress, whose most trifling details helped to bring out the beauties of her face, she placed upon her head the wreath of holly she had prepared, its numerous bunches of bright red berries repeating the color of the tunic most effectively in her hair. After twisting a few leaves in order to obtain the effect of the contrast between their face and back, Mademoiselle de Verneuil looked in the mirror to pass judgment upon her appearance as a whole.

"I am ghastly this evening!" she said, as if she were surrounded by admirers. "I look like a statue of Liberty."

She bestowed her dagger carefully in her corsage, allowing the rubies in the handle to protrude, so that their ruddy gleam might attract the eye to the treasures her rival had so shamefully prostituted. Francine could not make up her mind to leave her mistress. When she saw that she was ready to go, she easily found excuses for accompanying her, in all the obstacles women have to encounter, who attend a fête in a small town of Lower Bretagne. Must she not take Mademoiselle de Verneuil's cloak, her overshoes, which the mud and filth in the street compelled her to wear although gravel had been spread about, and the gauze veil behind which she concealed her face from the gaze of the Chouans who were attracted by curiosity to the house where the party was to take place? The crowd was so great that they walked between two lines of Chouans.

Francine made no further attempt to detain her mistress ; but after rendering the last services demanded by a toilet whose merit consisted in its being perfectly fresh, she remained in the courtyard in order not to abandon her to the hazards of her destiny without being at hand to fly to her succor, for the poor Breton girl anticipated nothing but disaster.

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A strange scene took place in the Marquis de Montauran's apartment just as Marie was on her way to the ball. The young marquis was finishing his toilet and adjusting the broad red ribbon that would serve to identify him as the most important person in the assemblage, when Abbé Gudin entered the room with an anxious face.

"Come quickly, monsieur le marquis," he said. "You alone can calm the storm that has arisen, I don't know on what subject, among the leaders. They are talking of leaving the king's service. I believe that devil of a Rifoël is at the bottom of the whole trouble. These quarrels are always caused by some foolish trifle. Madame du Gua reproached him, so I am told, for coming to the ball very ill-dressed."

"That woman must be mad," cried the marquis, "to try—"

"The Chevalier du Vissard," continued the abbe, interrupting him, "replied that, if you had given him the money promised in the king's name—"

"Enough, enough, monsieur l'abbé, I understand it all now! This scene was arranged beforehand, wasn't it? and you are the ambassador—"

"I, monsieur le marquis!" rejoined the abbé,



interrupting again, "I propose to support you vigorously, and you will, I trust, do me the justice to believe that the re-establishment of our altars in France, and the restoration of our king to the throne of his fathers are much more powerful incentives to my humble labors than the bishopric of Rennes which you—"

The abbé did not dare continue, for, at those words, the marquis smiled bitterly. But the young chief instantly repressed his gloomy reflections, his face assumed a stern expression, and he followed Abbé Gudin to a room from which a tremendous uproar proceeded.

"I recognize no man's authority here!" cried Rifoël, with an inflamed glance at all who stood about him, and putting his hand to his sword hilt.

"Do you recognize the authority of common sense?" demanded the marquis, coldly.

The young Chevalier du Vissard, better known by his patronymic Rifoël, held his peace before the general of the Catholic forces.

"What is the matter, messieurs?" said the young leader, scrutinizing all their faces.

"The matter is this, monsieur le marquis," replied a famous smuggler, evidently embarrassed like a man of the people who remains at first under the yoke of prejudice in presence of a great nobleman, but who recognizes no boundary when he has crossed the barrier that separates them, because he then sees in the nobleman only an equal; "the matter is that you come in the nick of time, I don't know



how to use flowery words, so I'll say what I mean bluntly. I commanded five hundred men all through the last war. Since we took up arms again, I have succeeded in finding a thousand heads as hard as my own, to serve the king. For seven years I've risked my life for the good cause, and—I don't mean to reproach you—but all hard work deserves pay. Now, to begin with, I want to be called Monsieur de Cottereau; I want to be recognized as a colonel; if not, I'll make a bargain with the First Consul to lay down my arms. You see, monsieur le marquis, my men and I have a devilish persistent creditor and we have to keep satisfying him!—There he is!" he added, striking his stomach.

"Have the violins come?" the marquis asked Madame du Gua in a contemptuous tone.

But the subject discussed by the smuggler with such brutal frankness was too important, and those minds, no less calculating than ambitious, had been too long in suspense as to what they might hope from the king, to allow the marquis's disdain to put an end to the scene. The youthful and hot headed Chevalier du Vissard stepped hastily in front of Montauran and took his hand to compel him to remain.

"Beware, monsieur le marquis," he said, "you treat too lightly men who have some claim to the gratitude of him you represent here. We know that His Majesty has given you full power to put a price upon our services, which ought to find their reward in this world or the other, for scaffolds are

erected every day for us. For my own part I know that the rank of field-marshal—”

“You mean colonel, do you not?”

“No, monsieur le marquis. Charette appointed me a colonel. As my claim to the rank I speak of cannot be contested, I am not pleading at this moment for myself, but for my intrepid brothers in arms, whose services need to be made known. Your signature and your promises will be enough for them to-day; and,” he said in an undertone, “I admit that they are easily satisfied. But,” he continued, raising his voice once more, “when the sun shall rise in the château of Versailles to shed light upon the happy days of the monarchy, will the faithful, who have aided the king to conquer France, in France, be able to obtain favors readily for their families, pensions for the widows, and restitution of the property that has been so inopportunately confiscated? I doubt it. And so, monsieur le marquis, the proofs of services rendered will not be amiss at that time. I shall never distrust the king, but I distrust exceedingly his corrompents of ministers and courtiers who will fill his ears full of considerations touching the public welfare, the honor of France, the interest of the crown and endless quantities of like trash. Then they will turn up their noses at a loyal Vendean or gallant Chouan, because he is old, and because the sword he drew for the good cause gets caught between his legs, that are wasted by privation.—Do you think we are wrong?”

“You speak admirably well, Monsieur du Vissard, but a little too soon,” replied the marquis.

“Hark ye, marquis,” said the Comte de Bauvan in an undertone, “Rifoël said some very good things, on my word. You see, you are sure of always having the king’s ear; but we fellows shall only see the master at long intervals; and I confess that, unless you gave me your word of honor that you would obtain for me in due time the office of Grand Master of Rivers and Forests, deuce take me if I would risk my neck. To conquer Normandie for the king is no trifling task, and I hope to have the Order for it.—But,” he added, blushing, “we have time enough to think of that. God forbid that I should imitate these poor devils and harass you. You will mention me to the king and it will be all right.”

Each of the leaders succeeded in signifying to the marquis, by more or less ingenious means, the exaggerated reward that he expected for his services. One modestly asked for the government of Bretagne, another for a barony, this one for a commission in the army, that one for a high office; and they all wanted pensions.

“Well, baron,” said the marquis to Monsieur du Guénic, “is there nothing that you want?”

“Faith, marquis, these gentlemen leave nothing for me but the crown of France, but I could do very well with that.”

“Consider, messieurs,” interposed Abbé Gudin in a voice of thunder, “that, if you are so insistent,

you will spoil everything on the day of victory. Will not the king be obliged to make concessions to the revolutionists ? ”

“ To the Jacobins ! ” cried the smuggler. “ Ah ! if the king will let me have my way, I will agree to employ my thousand men in hanging them and we shall soon be rid of them.”

“ Monsieur *de Cottereau*,” said the marquis, “ I see certain persons coming, who were invited to attend this meeting. We must vie with one another in zealous attentions in order to induce them to join in our sanctified undertaking, and you will understand that this is not the time to consider your demands, however just they may be.”

As he spoke, the marquis walked toward the door, as if to go and meet some of the provincial nobles whom he had seen approaching ; but the bold smuggler barred the way with a submissive and respectful demeanor.

“ No, no, monsieur le marquis ; excuse me, but the Jacobins taught us too well, in 1793, that he who sows the crop, doesn’t eat the cake. Just sign this slip of paper and to-morrow I bring you fifteen hundred gars ; if not, I make terms with the First Consul.”

Casting a haughty glance about the room, the marquis saw that the old partisan’s boldness and his determined bearing were not displeasing to a single one of the witnesses of the discussion. There was but one man who, sitting apart in a corner, seemed to take no interest in the scene, but busied himself

filling a clay pipe with tobacco. The disdainful expression with which he regarded the orators, his modest attitude and the sympathetic glances that the marquis met from his eyes, led him to examine more closely this generous-minded adherent, whom he recognized as Major Brigaut. The marquis suddenly walked up to him.

"And you," said he, "what have you to ask for?"

"Oh! monsieur le marquis, if the king returns, I am content."

"But for yourself?"

"Oh! for myself.—Monseigneur is jesting."

The marquis pressed the Breton's callous hand and said to Madame du Gua, as he stepped to her side:

"I may die, madame, before I have had time to make a faithful report to the king concerning the Catholic armies of Bretagne. If you live to see the Restoration, do not forget yonder gallant man or the Baron du Guénic. There is more real devotion in them than in all these people."

And he pointed to the others who were waiting with evident impatience for the marquis to comply with their demands. One and all held folded papers in their hands, wherein doubtless their services in the preceding wars were certified by the Royalist generals, and they all began to murmur. In the midst of them Abbé Gudin, the Comte de Bauvan and the Baron du Guénic were consulting as to the best means of assisting the marquis to repel such

exaggerated demands, for they saw that their young leader was in a very delicate position.

Suddenly the marquis flashed his blue eyes, gleaming with irony, over the assemblage, and said in a distinct voice :

“Messieurs, I do not know whether the powers the king has deigned to confer upon me are sufficiently extensive to enable me to satisfy your demands. He may not have foreseen such zeal, such devotion. You shall yourselves be the judges of my duty and perhaps I shall be able to fulfil it.”

He disappeared and returned at once, holding in his hand a folded document, bearing the royal seal and signature.

“Here are the letters patent by virtue of which it is your duty to obey me,” he said. “They authorize me to act as governor of Bretagne, Normandie, Maine and Anjou in the king’s name, and to recognize the services of those officers who shall distinguish themselves in his armies.”

There was a general movement of satisfaction throughout the assemblage. The Chouans walked toward the marquis and respectfully formed a circle about him. All eyes were fixed on the king’s signature. The young chieftain, who was standing in front of the fireplace, threw the document into the fire, where it was consumed in the twinkling of an eye.

“Henceforth, I propose to command only those who see in the king a king, and not a victim to be devoured,” cried the young man. “You are at liberty to abandon me, messieurs.”

Madame du Gua, Abbé Gudin, Major Brigaut, the Chevalier du Vissard, the Comte de Bauvan, and the Baron du Guénic enthusiastically shouted *Vive le roi!* Although the other leaders hesitated for a moment to echo the shout, ere long, carried away by the marquis's noble act, they implored him to forget what had happened, assuring him that he should still be their leader, even without the letters-patent.

"Let us go and dance," cried the Comte de Bauvan, "and let come what come may! After all," he added gayly, "it's much better, my friends, to address our prayers to God than to his saints. Let us fight first, and then we will see what comes next."

"Ah! that is very true! With due respect, monsieur le baron," said Brigaut in an undertone, addressing the loyal Du Guénic, "I have never heard of such a thing as demanding the day's wages early in the morning."

The party adjourned to the salons where some few persons were already assembled. The marquis tried in vain to put away the gloomy expression that his face wore, and the leaders readily perceived the discouraging impression that scene had produced upon a man whose devotion was still attended by the fair illusions of youth, and they were ashamed.

Symptoms of delirious joy were manifest in that assemblage composed of the most fanatical adherents of the Royalist party, who, having never had an opportunity to realize, in the heart of a rebellious

province, the real progress made by the Revolution, were quick to accept the most hypothetical hopes for realities. The bold operations begun by Montauran, his name, his fortune, his capacity, aroused the courage of all, and caused that political excitement, the most dangerous of all forms of excitement, because it is allayed only by torrents of blood, almost always uselessly shed. To all those present, the Revolution was simply a temporary disturbance in the kingdom of France, where, in their eyes, nothing was changed. The fields about them still belonged to the house of Bourbon. The Royalists were so absolutely supreme there that Hoche, four years before, obtained an armistice rather than peace. Therefore the nobles spoke of the Revolutionists in very slighting terms : to them Bonaparte was simply a Marceau, more fortunate than his predecessor. And so the women were in the best of spirits as they prepared for the dance. Only those of the leaders who had met the Blues in battle realized the gravity of the present crisis, and knowing that they would not be understood, if they should speak to their benighted compatriots of the First Consul and his great power, they talked among themselves, glancing at the ladies with an indifference for which these took their revenge by criticizing them. Madame du Gua, who took upon herself to do the honors of the ball, tried to soothe the impatience of the fair dancers by addressing to each in turn the customary compliments. The shrill tones of the instruments being put in tune were



beginning to be heard, when Madame du Gua spied the marquis, whose features still retained a melancholy expression. She walked swiftly to his side.

“I venture to hope that it is not the very commonplace scene that you had with those clowns that has depressed you so?” she said.

She obtained no reply; the marquis, absorbed in his reverie, fancied that he was listening to some of the arguments that Marie, with prophetic voice, had urged upon him amid those same men, at La Vivetière, to induce him to abandon the conflict of kings against nations. But the young man had too much nobility of soul, too much pride, too much sincere conviction, perhaps, to lay aside the work he had begun, and he determined at that moment to go on with it courageously, despite all obstacles. He proudly raised his head, and then he understood what Madame du Gua was saying to him.

“Your mind is at Fougères, doubtless!” she said with a bitterness that revealed the fruitlessness of the efforts she had made to distract the marquis. “Ah! monsieur, I would give my blood to put *her* into your hands, and to see you happy with her.”

“In that case, why did you fire at her with such careful aim?”

“Because I wanted her to be dead or in your arms. Yes, monsieur, I could have loved the Marquis de Montauran on the day that I thought I saw a hero in him. Now, I have no other feeling for him than a sort of compassionate friendship, for I see him

shut out from a glorious career by the wandering heart of a ballet-dancer."

"So far as love is concerned," retorted the marquis ironically, "you judge me very poorly! If I loved that girl, madame, I should desire her less—and, except for you, perhaps, I should have ceased to think of her before this."

"Here she is!" said Madame du Gua abruptly.

The precipitate haste with which the marquis turned his head wounded the poor woman to the quick; but, as the bright light of the candles enabled her to note the slightest change in the features of the man she loved so fiercely, she fancied that she could discover therein some hope of returning affection, when he turned his face toward her once more, smiling at her woman's stratagem.

"What are you laughing at?" queried the Comte de Bauvan.

"At a soap-bubble that has just burst!" replied Madame du Gua joyously. "The marquis, if his word is to be believed, was much astonished just now to find that his heart beat fast for an instant at the thought of that creature who called herself Mademoiselle de Verneuil. Do you know her?"

"That creature?" rejoined the count in a reproachful tone. "Madame, it is for the author of a wrong to repair it, and I give you my word of honor that she is really the daughter of the Duc de Verneuil."

"Monsieur le comte," said the marquis in a voice expressive of deep emotion, "which of your two

statements am I to believe, that at La Vivetière or that at Saint-James ? ”

A loud voice announced Mademoiselle de Verneuil. The count darted to the door, offered his hand to the lovely stranger with every token of the most profound respect, and as he led her through the gaping crowd to present her to the marquis and Madame du Gua, he answered the confounded young chief's question :

“ Believe only my statement of to-day ! ”

Madame du Gua turned pale at sight of that ill-omened woman, who stood still for a moment glancing haughtily over the assemblage in search of those who had been of the party at La Vivetière. She awaited the perfunctory salutation of her rival, and, without looking at the marquis, allowed the count to lead her to a place of honor, beside Madame du Gua, upon whom she bestowed a slight, patronizing bow, but who, with the keen instinct of a woman, restrained her anger and at once assumed an affable and smiling demeanor. Mademoiselle de Verneuil's extraordinary costume and her beauty caused a momentary murmur of admiration. When the marquis and Madame du Gua turned their eyes upon those who had been guests at La Vivetière, they found them in a respectful attitude that did not seem to be feigned, each of them apparently seeking some method of reinstating himself in the favor of the maltreated young Parisian. The enemies were face to face.

“ Why, this is witchcraft, mademoiselle ! No one

on earth but you could so surprise your friends. Have you come all alone?" said Madame du Gua.

"All alone," echoed Mademoiselle de Verneuil; "so, madame, you have nobody but myself to slaughter to-night."

"Be a little indulgent," rejoined Madame du Gua. "I can not express the pleasure I feel at seeing you again. Really I was crushed by the thought of the wrong I had done you, and I was seeking an opportunity to atone for it."

"As for the wrong done, madame, I readily forgive all that you have done me: but I have on my heart the death of the Blues you murdered. I might perhaps complain also of the rigidity of your correspondence. However, I overlook everything in view of the service you have rendered me."

Madame du Gua lost countenance when she felt her fair rival press her hand and saw her insulting smile. The marquis had not moved, but at that moment he seized the count's arm in a strong grasp.

"You deceived me shamefully," he said, "and you compromised my honor; I am not a G ronte, and I must have your life or you mine."

"Marquis," replied the count haughtily, "I am ready to give you whatever explanations you desire."

And they went toward the adjoining room. Those persons who understood the scene least began to realize its interest, so that, when the violins gave the signal for the dancing to begin, no one moved.

"Pray, mademoiselle, what service have I had

the honor of rendering you, to deserve—?” began Madame du Gua, pressing her lips together in a sort of frenzy.

“Why, madame, did you not enlighten me as to the Marquis de Montauran’s real character? With what indifference that man allowed me to go to my death! I abandon him to you with all my heart.”

“Then why have you come here?” said Madame du Gua eagerly.

“To recover the esteem and consideration that you stole from me at La Vivetière, madame. As for anything more than that, have no fear. Even if the marquis should return to me, you must know that a return of that sort is never love.”

Thereupon Madame du Gua took Mademoiselle de Verneuil’s hand with the effusiveness that women display so freely among themselves, especially in the presence of men.

“Ah! well, my poor girl, I am delighted to find you so reasonable. If the service I rendered you was somewhat rough at first,” she said, pressing the hand she held, although she longed to tear it with her nails when she felt its velvety softness, “it shall at least be complete. Listen, I am well acquainted with the Gars’s character,” she added with a perfidious smile; “well, he would have deceived you, he does not intend to, he cannot marry anyone.”

“Ah!”

“Yes, mademoiselle; he accepted his dangerous mission only to earn the hand of Mademoiselle

d'Uxelles, an alliance in procuring which His Majesty has promised him his warmest support."

"Aha!"

Mademoiselle de Verneuil did not add a word to that mocking exclamation. The young and comely Chevalier du Vissard, eager to obtain forgiveness for the jest that had given the signal for the insults at La Vivetière, approached her and respectfully invited her to dance; she gave him her hand and they joined the quadrille in which Madame du Gua had taken her place. The appearance of the ladies present, whose costumes recalled the fashions of the exiled court, their hair being powdered or tightly curled, seemed absurd when compared with the refined, rich, yet severely simple costume which the prevailing fashion justified Mademoiselle de Verneuil in wearing—a costume that was condemned aloud but inwardly envied by the ladies. The men did not grow weary of admiring the beauty of her natural headdress, and the details of a toilet whose charm consisted in the noble proportions it revealed.

At that moment the marquis and the count returned to the ball-room and stood behind Mademoiselle de Verneuil, who did not turn. If a mirror that she was facing had not informed her of the marquis's presence, she would have guessed it from the countenance of Madame du Gua, whose apparently indifferent expression ill concealed the impatience with which she awaited the conflict that was certain to break out, sooner or later, between the two lovers. Although the marquis was engaged

in conversation with the count and two other persons, he could none the less hear the remarks of the dancers, who, in executing the figures of the contradance, occupied momentarily the place of Mademoiselle de Verneuil and her neighbors.

“*Mon Dieu*, yes, madame, she came alone,” said one.

“She must be very bold,” replied his partner.

“Why, if I were dressed like that, I should feel as if I were naked,” said another lady.

“Oh! it’s not a decent costume,” replied her cavalier, “but she is so lovely and it is so becoming to her!”

“Upon my word, I am ashamed for her, she dances so perfectly. Don’t you think that she has every appearance of being a dancer at the Opéra?” said the jealous lady.

“Do you suppose she has come here to negotiate for peace in the name of the First Consul?” queried a third female.

“What nonsense!” rejoined her partner.

“She will hardly bring her husband innocence for her dowry,” laughed the lady.

The Gars turned abruptly to look at the person who indulged in that epigram, whereupon Madame du Gua’s eyes met his with an expression that plainly said: “You see what people think of her!”

“Madame,” said the count laughingly, to Marie’s enemy, “it’s only the ladies as yet who have robbed her of it.”

The marquis inwardly forgave the count all his

sins. When he ventured to glance at his mistress, whose charms, like those of almost all women, were enhanced by the light of the candles, she turned her back on him as she returned to her place, and began to talk with her partner, allowing the sweetest tones of which her voice was capable to reach the marquis's ear.

"The First Consul sends us very dangerous ambassadors!" said her partner.

"That has already been said at La Vivetière, monsieur," she replied.

"Why, your memory is as good as the king's!" retorted the chevalier, annoyed at his misstep.

"One must have a good memory in order to forgive insults," she rejoined quickly, extricating him from his embarrassment by a smile.

"Are we all included in that amnesty?" queried the marquis.

But she plunged into the dance with childish excitement, leaving him abashed and without a reply; he gazed at her with a cold and melancholy air, she noticed it, and thereupon she inclined her head with one of the coquettish movements that the graceful proportions of her neck made possible for her, and certainly forgot none of the motions calculated to display the rare perfection of her figure. Marie fascinated like hope, she eluded pursuit like a fleeting memory. To see her thus was to be determined to possess her at any cost. She knew it, and her very consciousness of her beauty gave an inexpressible charm to her features. The marquis felt a



hurricane of love, of frenzy and madness rising in his heart ; he wrung the count's hand violently and left the room.

"So he has gone, has he ?" said Mademoiselle de Verneuil, returning to her place.

The count, with a significant gesture to his protégée, darted into the adjoining room, and returned with the Gars.

"He is mine," she said to herself, as she scrutinized in the mirror the marquis's agitated face, which was beaming with hope.

She received the young leader with a pouting face and without a word, but she left him with a smile ; she realized his superiority so fully that she was proud to be able to tyrannize over him, and she determined to make him pay dearly for a few soft words, in order to teach him their value, following an instinctive impulse to which all women yield more or less. When the contra-dance was at an end, all the gentlemen from La Vivetière crowded about Marie, and each one of them implored her forgiveness for his error, with compliments more or less gracefully turned ; but he whom she longed to see at her feet did not approach the group where she held court.

"He thinks that I love him still," she said to herself, "he does not choose to be confounded with those who are indifferent to me."

She declined to dance. Then, as if the function had been given for her, she went from quadrille to quadrille, leaning on the arm of the Comte de

Bauvan, whom she was pleased to treat with some degree of familiarity. The episode of La Vivetière, even to its most trifling details, was by this time known to the whole assemblage, thanks to the efforts of Madame du Gua, who hoped, by calling attention to Mademoiselle de Verneuil and the marquis, to place an additional obstacle in the way of their reunion ; so that the two disunited lovers had become the objects of general attention. Montauran did not dare approach his mistress, for his realization of the wrong he had done her and the violence of his rekindled passion made her almost terrible to him ; and, on her side, the young woman, while pretending to look at the dancing, kept close watch upon his deceitfully calm face.

“It’s horribly warm here,” she said to her cavalier. “I see that Monsieur de Montauran’s forehead is all wet. Take me to the other side of the room so that I can breathe—I am stifling.”

With a motion of her head, she indicated to the count the adjoining salon, where some few of the guests were playing cards. The marquis followed his mistress thither, having divined her words from the movement of her lips. He dared to hope that she had left the crowd only for the purpose of seeing him, and that assumed favor increased his passion beyond words ; for his love had waxed greater with all the efforts to crush it he had thought it his duty to make during the last few days. Mademoiselle de Verneuil took pleasure in tormenting the young nobleman, and her glance, which had been so sweet

and velvety for the count, became stern and forbidding when she chanced to meet the marquis's eyes. Montauran seemed to make a painful effort to restrain his feelings, and said in a hollow voice :

“ Will you never forgive me ? ”

“ Love,” she replied coldly, “ forgives nothing or forgives everything. But,” she added, as he made a joyful gesture, “ one must love.”

She had taken the count's arm once more and walked quickly to a boudoir adjoining the card room. The marquis followed her.

“ You must listen to me ! ” he cried.

“ You will cause it to be thought, monsieur,” she replied, “ that I came here on your account and not from respect for myself. If you do not cease this hateful pursuit, I will retire.”

“ Very well,” he said, remembering one of the maddest freaks of the last Duc de Lorraine, “ let me speak to you while I can hold this piece of charcoal in my hand.”

He stooped to the hearth, seized a burning brand and grasped it tightly. Mademoiselle de Verneuil blushed, quickly released her arm from the count's and gazed at the marquis in amazement. The count softly withdrew and left the lovers alone. Such an insane act made Marie's heart waver, for nothing is more persuasive in love than courageous folly.

“ You prove to me,” she said, trying to make him throw down the burning wood, “ that you are willing to subject me to the most cruel of all punishments. You go to extremes in everything. On the

word of a fool and the slander of a woman, you suspected her who had just saved your life, of being capable of selling you ! ”

“ Yes,” he said, smiling, “ I was cruel to you ; but forget it, for I shall never forget it. Listen to me—I have been shamefully deceived, but so many circumstances combined against you on that fatal day—”

“ And those circumstances were sufficient to extinguish your love ? ”

He hesitated to reply, whereupon she made a disdainful gesture and rose.

“ Oh ! Marie, now I will never believe that you—”

“ Throw away that fire ! You are mad. Open your hand—I wish you to ! ”

He playfully offered some slight resistance to his mistress’s gentle efforts, in order to prolong the keen pleasure that he felt in the strong pressure of her soft, slender fingers ; but she succeeded at last in opening his hand, which she longed to kiss. The blood had extinguished the flame.

“ Well, what good did that do you ? ” said she.

She tore her handkerchief into strips and bound up the slight wound, which the marquis soon covered with his glove. Madame du Gua stole into the card room on tiptoe and cast furtive glances at the two lovers, skilfully avoiding their eyes by leaning back at their slightest movement ; but it was very difficult for her to make out what they were saying from what she saw them doing.

“If everything that they told you about me had been true, you must admit that I should be amply avenged now!” said Marie with a malevolent expression that made the marquis turn pale.

“What motive was it, pray, that brought you here?”

“Why, my dear child, you are a very great fool. Do you imagine that you can treat a woman like me with contempt, and go unpunished?—I came here both on your account and on my own,” she continued after a pause, putting her hand upon the cluster of rubies at her breast and pointing to the blade of her dagger.

“What does all that mean?” thought Madame du Gua.

“But,” continued Marie, “you love me still. At all events, you desire me still; and the foolish thing you have just done,” she added, taking his hand, “has proved it to me. I have become once more what I longed to be, and I go from here a happy woman. The man who loves us is always absolved. As for myself, I have the love, I have recovered the esteem of the man who, in my eyes, represents the whole world: I am ready to die.”

“Then you still love me?” said the marquis.

“Have I said that?” she retorted mockingly, following with glee the progress of the frightful torture she had compelled the marquis to undergo from the moment of her arrival. “Was I not compelled to make sacrifices in order to come here? I saved Monsieur de Bauvan from death, and he, more grate-

ful than you, offered me, in exchange for my protection, his fortune and his name. You never thought of that."

The marquis, dazed by her last words, repressed the most violent wrath that he had yet experienced, believing that he had been duped by the count, and made no reply.

"Ah! you are reflecting?" she continued with a bitter smile.

"Mademoiselle," rejoined the young man, "your suspicion justifies mine."

"Monsieur, let us go away from here!" cried Mademoiselle de Verneuil, as she caught sight of a corner of Madame du Gua's dress.

She rose. But her longing to drive her rival to despair made her hesitate about taking her leave.

"Do you really wish to plunge me into hell?" demanded the marquis, taking her hand and squeezing it violently.

"Didn't you do just that to me five days ago? At this very moment, do you not leave me in the most cruel uncertainty concerning the sincerity of your love?"

"How do I know that you will not carry your vengeance so far as to take possession of my whole life, in order to cast shame upon it, instead of trying to compass my death?"

"Ah! you don't love me: you think of yourself, not of me!" she exclaimed wildly, shedding a few tears.

Well the coquette knew the power of her eyes when they were swimming in tears.

“ Oh ! take my life, ” he said, beside himself with passion, “ but dry your eyes.”

“ O my love,” she cried in a stifled voice, “ those are the words, the tone and the glance I have waited for, before preferring your happiness to my own !— But, monsieur,” she continued, “ I demand one last proof of your affection which, you say, is so great, I can stay here only so long as is necessary to let it be known that you are mine. I would not take so much as a glass of water in the house where a woman lives who has twice tried to kill me, who, for aught I know, is still plotting some treachery against us, and who, at this moment, is listening to us,” she added, pointing out to the marquis the waving folds of Madame du Gua’s dress.

Then she wiped her eyes, put her mouth to the young man’s ear, who shuddered as he felt the soft moisture of her breath caressing him.

“ Make everything ready for our departure,” she said ; “ you must escort me back to Fougères, and not till then will you know whether I love you ! For the second time, I trust myself to you. Will you trust yourself to me a second time ? ”

“ Ah ! Marie, you have brought me to the point where I no longer know what I am doing ! I am intoxicated by your words, by your glances, by you, in a word, and I am ready to do anything to gratify you.”

“ Very well, make me, for a moment, as happy

as a queen ! Let me enjoy the only triumph I have craved. I long to breathe freely in the life I have dreamed of living, and to feed upon my illusions before they vanish. So come and dance with me."

They returned together to the ball-room, and although Mademoiselle de Verneuil was as completely gratified in her heart and in her vanity as a woman can be, the impenetrable sweetness of her eyes, the pleased smile upon her lips, the rapid movements of an animated dance, kept the secret of her thoughts as the sea keeps that of a criminal who entrusts a heavy body to it. Nevertheless, a murmur of admiration arose on all sides when she threw herself into her lover's arms to waltz, and they glided over the floor in a voluptuous embrace, with languishing eyes and drooping heads, pressing each other close in a sort of frenzy and revealing all the pleasure that they anticipated from a more intimate union.

"Count," said Madame du Gua to Monsieur de Bauvan, "go and ascertain if Pille-Miche is in the camp; bring him to me; and be assured that you may demand from me, for that trifling service, whatever you wish, even my hand.—My revenge will cost me dear," she said to herself as she watched him move away; "but this time I shall not miss it."





A few moments after this scene, Mademoiselle de Verneuil and the marquis were on the back seat of a berlin drawn by four strong horses. Surprised to see those two supposed enemies hand in hand and to find them in such perfect accord, Francine was speechless, not daring to ask herself if it was perfidy or love in her mistress's case. Thanks to her silence and the darkness of the night, the marquis did not notice Mademoiselle de Verneuil's agitation as they approached Fougères. In the first rays of dawn, they espied the tower of Saint-Léonard in the distance. At that moment Marie said to herself :

“I am going to die !”

At the first hill the two lovers had the same thought: they alighted from the carriage and climbed the hill on foot, as if in memory of their first meeting. When Marie had taken the young man's arm and walked a few steps, she thanked him with a smile for having respected her silence ; and when they reached the summit of the plateau from which they could see Fougères, she emerged altogether from her reverie.

“Go no farther,” she said ; “my power would not save you from the Blues to-day.”

Montauran manifested some surprise ; she smiled

sadly, pointed to a block of granite as if to command him to be seated, and she herself remained standing in a melancholy attitude. The heart-rending emotions by which she was torn made it impossible for her to resort longer to the artifices of which she had been so lavish. At that moment she would have knelt upon burning coals, feeling them no more than the marquis had felt the brand he seized to attest the violence of his passion. After gazing long at her lover with an expression instinct with the most profound grief, she uttered these frightful words :

“ All that you suspected of me is true ! ”

The marquis made a gesture.

“ Ah ! in pity’s name,” she said, clasping her hands, “ listen to me without interrupting me.—I am really,” she continued in a voice trembling with emotion, “ the daughter of the Duc de Verneuil, but a natural daughter. My mother, a Mademoiselle de Casteran, who took the veil to escape the tortures that were being made ready for her in her family, expiated her fault by fifteen years of weeping, and died at Sééz. Not until she was on her deathbed did the pious abbess implore help for me from the man who had deserted her ; for she knew that I was without friends, without means, without prospects. —That man, always remembered under the roof of Francine’s mother, in whose care I had been placed, had forgotten his child. Nevertheless the duke was glad to receive me, and acknowledged me, because I was beautiful and perhaps because I reminded him of his own youth. He was one of those noblemen

who, under the last reign, gloried in showing how easily a man can obtain forgiveness for a crime by committing it gracefully. I will say no more ; he was my father ! Let me explain to you, however, how well adapted my life in Paris was to corrupt my heart. The Duc de Verneuil's social circle and that to which he introduced me were saturated with the sneering philosophy which aroused France to enthusiasm because its doctrines were always put forward with abundance of wit. The brilliant conversation that delighted my ears attracted me by the keenness of the rapid sketches of men and things or by a disdain cleverly expressed for whatever was devout and true. The men, sneering at the sentiments, described them better in that they did not feel them ; and they charmed me as much by their epigrammatic expressions as by the easy grace with which they could describe a whole adventure in a single word ; but they often sinned by having too much wit, and fatigued the women by making love an art rather than an affair of the heart. I made a feeble resistance to the torrent. My heart however—pardon my pride—was passionate enough to feel that wit had withered all their hearts ; but the life I led resulted in establishing a perpetual struggle between my natural impulses and the vicious habits I had contracted there. Some superior minds had amused themselves by developing in me that freedom of thought, that contempt for public opinion which deprive a woman of a certain modesty of mind without which she loses her charm.

Alas ! misfortune could not overcome the defects that opulence bred in me.—My father,” she continued, after pausing to utter a sigh, “the Duc de Verneuil, died after acknowledging me as his daughter and providing for me by a will which considerably diminished the fortune of my brother, his legitimate son. I found myself one morning without shelter or protector. My brother attacked the will that enriched me. Three years passed with a wealthy family had developed my vanity. By gratifying all my whims, my father had created in me a need of luxurious living and habits of which my mind, still young and innocent, did not pause to consider the dangers or the tyranny. A friend of my father, the Maréchal Duc de Lenoncourt, a man of seventy, offered to be my guardian. I accepted his offer ; a few days after the beginning of that hateful lawsuit, I found myself once more in a fine house where I enjoyed all the advantages that a brother’s cruelty denied me at our father’s coffin. Every evening the old marshal passed a few hours with me, and during those hours I never heard aught but gentle and comforting words from him. His white hair and all the touching proofs he gave me of a paternal affection, led me to pour out upon his heart the sentiments of my own, and I took pleasure in imagining myself his daughter. I accepted the gifts he offered and I concealed none of my whims from him when I saw how pleased he was to gratify them. One evening I learned that all Paris believed that I was that poor old man’s mistress. They

proved to me that it was out of my power to recover a reputation for innocence which every one gratuitously denied me. The man who had abused my inexperience could not be my lover and would not be my husband. During the week in which I made this horrible discovery, on the eve of the day fixed for my union with him whose name I had demanded that he confer upon me as the only reparation he could offer me, he started for Coblenz. I was driven away in disgrace from the house in which the marshal had placed me and which did not belong to him. Thus far I have told you the whole truth as if I were before God; but now, do not ask an unfortunate girl to revive sorrows that are buried in her memory. One day, monsieur, I found myself married to Danton. Some days later the tempest uprooted the great oak around which I had wound my arms. Finding myself plunged once more into the most profound destitution, I resolved that time to die. I cannot say whether love of life, the hope of tiring out misfortune and of finding, at the bottom of that bottomless abyss, the happiness that eluded me, advised me without my knowledge, or whether I was seduced by the arguments of a young man from Vendôme who attached himself to me two years ago, like a serpent to a tree, thinking, I have no doubt, that some supreme disaster may throw me into his arms; at all events, I accepted—I know not how I could have done it—the degrading mission of winning the love of a stranger and betraying him to the authorities, for which I was to receive three

hundred thousand francs. I saw you, monsieur, and I recognized you at once by one of those presentiments which never deceive us ; however, I preferred to doubt, for the more I loved you the more the certainty terrified me. When I saved you from Commandant Hulot's hands, I abjured my rôle and resolved to deceive the executioners instead of deceiving their victim. I was wrong to make playthings thus of men, of their lives and their designs, and of myself, with the recklessness of a girl who sees naught but sentiment in the world. I believed that you loved me and I gave way to the hope of beginning my life anew ; but everything, even to myself perhaps, tended to betray my past disorders, for you must have been suspicious of a woman so passionate as I. Alas ! who would not forgive both my love and my dissimulation ? Yes, monsieur, it seemed to me as if I had had a horrible dream, and on awakening I found myself sixteen years old once more. Was I not in Alençon where the pure, chaste memories of my childhood came back to me ? I was mad and simple enough to believe that love would baptize me with innocence. For a moment I thought that I was still a virgin, as I had never loved before. But last night your passion seemed to me to be genuine, and a voice cried out to me : ' Why deceive him ? ' Understand then, monsieur le marquis," she continued, in a hoarse voice that haughtily invited reproach, " understand that I am a dishonored creature, unworthy of you. From this moment I resume my rôle of profligate, worn out as I am by

playing the part of a woman to whom you have restored all the sanctity of love. Virtue weighs upon me. I should despise you if you were weak enough to marry me. It is a folly that a Comte de Bauvan might commit; but do you, monsieur, be worthy of your future and part from me without regret. The courtesan, you see, would be too exacting; she would love you in a different way from the simple, artless girl, who has felt for a moment in her heart the hope of being able to be your companion, of making you happy all your life, of doing you honor, of becoming a grand, noble-hearted wife, and who has derived from that hope the courage to reanimate her evil nature, tainted with vice and infamy, in order to place an everlasting barrier between you and herself. I sacrifice honor and fortune to you. The pride I feel in this sacrifice will sustain me in my misery, and destiny may deal with me at its pleasure. I will never betray you. I return to Paris. There your name will be to me like another myself and the renown with which you will surround it will console me for all my sorrows. As for you, you are a man, you will forget me.—Adieu.”

She darted away in the direction of the valley of Saint-Sulpice, and disappeared before the marquis had risen to detain her; but she retraced her steps, hid in a cavity among the rocks, raised her head, scrutinized the marquis with an expression of interest mingled with doubt, and saw him walk away like one overwhelmed, as if he had no idea where he was going.

“Can it be that he is weak?” she said to herself when he disappeared, and she felt that she was parted from him. “Will he understand me?”

She shuddered. Suddenly she started off alone at a swift pace toward Fougères, as if she feared that the marquis would follow her to that town, where he would have found death awaiting him.

“Well, Francine, what did he say to you?” she asked the faithful Breton girl, when they were together once more.

“Alas! Marie, I pitied him. You great ladies stab a man with your tongues.”

“How did he seem when he spoke to you?”

“Do you think he saw me?—O Marie, he loves you!”

“Oh! he loves me or he does not love me!” she replied, “paradise or hell for me. Between those two extremes I see no place where I can put my foot.”

Having thus accomplished her terrible destiny, Marie could abandon herself freely to her grief, and her features, thus far steadied by so many diverse sentiments, changed so rapidly that, after a day during which she had fluctuated constantly between a foreshadowing of happiness and dire despair, her beauty lost its brilliancy and freshness, the source of which is found in the absence of all passion or in the intoxication of joy. Curious to learn the result of her rash undertaking, Hulot and Corentin called upon Marie a short time after her return: she received them with a smiling face.



"Well," she said to the commandant, whose thoughtful features wore a very inquisitive expression, "the fox is returning within gunshot and you will soon win a glorious victory."

"What has happened?" asked Corentin carelessly, bestowing upon Mademoiselle de Verneuil one of the sidelong glances by which diplomatists of his class spy upon the mind.

"Ah!" she replied, "the Gars is more than ever enamored of my person and I compelled him to accompany us to the gates of Fougères."

"It seems that your power ceased there," rejoined Corentin, "and that the *ci-devant's* fear still surpasses the love you have inspired in him."

Mademoiselle de Verneuil cast a scornful glance at Corentin.

"You judge him by yourself," she retorted.

"Well, then," said he, unmoved, "why didn't you bring him here to your apartments?"

"If he really loved me, commandant," she said to Hulot, with a mischievous glance at him, "would you blame me much for saving him by taking him away from France?"

The old soldier walked quickly to her and took her hand to kiss it with something very like enthusiasm; then he gazed fixedly at her and said with a sombre expression:

"You forget my two friends and my sixty-three men!"

"Ah! commandant," she said with all the artlessness of passion, "he is not accountable for them,

he was deceived by a vile woman, Charette's mistress, who would drink the blood of a Blue, I verily believe."

"Come, Marie," interposed Corentin, "don't make fun of the commandant, he's not used to your pleasantry."

"Be quiet," she replied, "and remember that the day on which you annoy me a little too much will have no to-morrow for you."

"I see, mademoiselle," said Hulot without bitterness, "that I must get ready to fight."

"You are not in condition to do it, my dear colonel. I saw more than six thousand men at Saint-James, regular troops, artillery and English officers. But what would become of these people without him? I believe with Fouché that his head is everything."

"Well, shall we have him?" demanded Corentin impatiently.

"I don't know," she replied with assumed indifference.

"Englishmen!" cried Hulot indignantly, "he needed only that to be a finished brigand! Ah! I'll give you Englishmen! It seems, citizen diplomat, that you allow yourself to be routed periodically by that young woman," said Hulot to Corentin, when they were a few steps from the house.

"It is quite natural, citizen commandant," rejoined Corentin pensively, "that in all that she has said to us, you should see nothing but fire. You soldiers are not aware that there are several ways of making

war. To make skilful use of the passions of men or women as of springs which one works to the advantage of the State, to put all the parts of the great machine we call government in their proper places, and to amuse one's self by attaching thereto the most unconquerable sentiments like hair-triggers which it is exciting to watch—is not that to create, and, like God, to take one's place in the centre of the universe ? ”

“ You will permit me to prefer my trade to yours,” rejoined the soldier dryly. “ You can do what you please with your machinery ; but I know no other superior than the minister of war ; I have my orders, I am going to take the field with comrades who don't hang back, and who attack the enemy in front that you want to seize from behind.”

“ Oh ! you can make ready to march,” said Co-rentin. “ From what that girl allowed me to gather from her talk, however impenetrable she seems to you, you are going to have a skirmish, and I will obtain for you before long the pleasure of a tête-à-tête with the leader of these brigands.”

“ How so ? ” queried Hulot, stepping back in order to have a better view of that extraordinary personage.

“ Mademoiselle de Verneuil loves the Gars,” Co-rentin replied in a hollow voice, “ and it may be that he loves her ! A marquis, with the red ribbon, young and clever, and still rich, for aught we know.—what a combination of temptations ! She would be a great fool not to act on her own account, and

try to marry him instead of betraying him to us! She is trying to fool us. But I read in her eyes some hesitation. The lovers will probably arrange a meeting, and perhaps it is already arranged. Well, to-morrow, I shall have my man by both ears. Until now he was only the enemy of the Republic, but he has become my private enemy within a few moments; now, they who have undertaken to put themselves between that young woman and myself have all died on the scaffold."

With that Corentin relapsed into such deep thought that he did not see the profound disgust depicted on the loyal soldier's features when he discovered the full depth of the intrigue and the mechanism of the springs worked by Fouché. He determined to foil Corentin in everything that would not essentially interfere with the aims and the success of the government, and to afford the enemy of the Republic the means of meeting death honorably, arms in hand, instead of falling a victim to the executioner whose purveyor this hired assassin of the secret police acknowledged that he was.

"If the First Consul would listen to me," he said, turning his back on Corentin, "he would leave these foxes to fight the aristocrats—they are worthy of each other—and would employ his soldiers on other business."

Corentin glanced coldly at the soldier, whose face was lighted up by that thought, and his eyes took on an ironical expression that made manifest the superior shrewdness of this subordinate Machiavelli.

“ Give these creatures three ells of blue cloth and hang a bit of steel at their side,” he said to himself, “ and they fancy that even in politics men are to be killed in only one way.”

He walked along slowly for a few moments, then suddenly said to himself :

“ Yes, the time has come, that woman shall be mine ! For five years the circle I have drawn about her has insensibly narrowed, I have her now, and with her I shall rise as high in the government as Fouché. Yes, if she destroys the only man she has ever loved, grief will deliver her to me, body and soul. All I have to do is to watch night and day until I discover her secret.”

A moment later an observer would have distinguished his pale face through the window of a house from which he could see everybody who entered the blind alley formed by the row of houses parallel to Saint-Léonard's church. With the patience of a cat watching a mouse, Corentin was still there the next morning, quick to notice the slightest noise and busily occupied in subjecting every passer-by to the severest scrutiny. The day just beginning was a market-day. Although, in those calamitous times, the peasants rarely ventured to visit the town, Corentin saw one man with lowering face, dressed in goatskin, who carried on his arm a small, round, flat basket, walking toward Mademoiselle de Verneuil's house, after glancing about with apparent indifference. Corentin went down, intending to wait for the peasant to come out ;

but it suddenly occurred to him that, if he could come upon Mademoiselle de Verneuil unexpectedly, he might surprise at a single glance the secrets hidden in the messenger's basket. Moreover he knew from common report that it was almost impossible to contend successfully with the impenetrable responses of Bretons and Normans.

"Galope-Chopine!" cried Mademoiselle de Verneuil when Francine ushered in the Chouan. "Can it be that he loves me in spite of all?" she said to herself in a low voice.

An instinctive hope caused her cheeks to flush brilliantly and a wave of joy to flow through her heart. Galope-Chopine looked from the mistress of the house to Francine, eyeing the latter with suspicion; but a gesture from Mademoiselle de Verneuil reassured him.

"Madame," he said, "*he* will be at my house about two o'clock and will wait for you there."

Mademoiselle de Verneuil's emotion permitted her to make no other reply than an inclination of the head, but a Samoyède would have understood her meaning. At that moment Corentin's steps were heard in the salon. Galope-Chopine was not disturbed in the slightest degree when Mademoiselle de Verneuil's expression as well as the sudden start she gave, warned him of danger, and as soon as the spy showed his crafty face, the Chouan raised his voice to an ear-splitting pitch.

"Aha!" he said to Francine, "there's Bretagne butter and Bretagne butter. You want it from Gi-

barry and you won't give but eleven sous a pound, eh ? then you needn't have sent for me ! It's good butter, that," he said, uncovering his basket to show two little pats of butter of Barbette's make.—"Fair play, my good lady, come, put on another sou."

His cavernous voice betrayed no emotion, and his green eyes, shaded by great grizzled eyebrows, sustained Corentin's piercing glance without faltering.

"Nonsense, hold your tongue, goodman, you didn't come here to sell butter, for you're dealing with a woman who never haggled about the price of anything in her life. The trade you're following, old fellow, will make you a head shorter than you are, some day."

He added, putting his hand amicably on his shoulder :

"You can't be both a Chouan and a Blue very long, you know."

Galope-Chopine needed all his presence of mind to restrain his rage and not repel that accusation, to which his avarice made him fairly liable. He contented himself with this reply :

"Monsieur is making fun of me."

Corentin had turned his back on the Chouan ; but as he saluted Mademoiselle de Verneuil, whose heart sank within her, he could readily watch him in the mirror. Galope-Chopine, who thought that the spy's eye was no longer upon him, consulted Francine with a glance, and Francine pointed to the door, saying :

“Come with me, goodman, and we will arrange it.”

Nothing had escaped Corentin, neither the contraction of the features, which Mademoiselle de Verneuil's smile ill disguised, nor the flush on her cheeks and her changed expression, nor the Chouan's disquietude, nor Francine's gesture—he had noticed everything. Convinced that Galope-Chopine was an emissary of the marquis, he caught him by the long hairs of his goatskin just as he was leaving the room, turned him around until they were face to face, and gazed fixedly at him, saying :

“Where do you live, my dear friend? I need some butter—”

“My good monsieur,” the Chouan replied, “all Fougères knows where I live, I am almost—”

“Corentin!” exclaimed Mademoiselle de Verneuil, interrupting Galope-Chopine's reply, “you are very insolent to come to my apartments at this hour and surprise me in this way! I am hardly dressed. Let that peasant alone, he doesn't understand your cunning any more than I understand its motive.—Go on, my good man!”

Galope-Chopine hesitated a moment before going. The natural or feigned indecision of a poor devil who did not know whom to obey, was beginning to impose upon Corentin, when the Chouan, at an imperative gesture from the young woman, left the room with heavy steps. Thereupon Mademoiselle de Verneuil and Corentin gazed at each other in silence. But Marie's limpid eyes could not sustain



the fiery gleam distilled by the man's look. The resolute air with which the spy forced his way into her room, the, to Marie, unfamiliar expression on his face, the deadened sound of his shrill voice, his bearing, everything combined to terrify her: she realized that a secret conflict was about to begin between them, and that he would put forth against her all the powers of his sinister influence; but, although she had at that moment a distinct and complete view of the abyss into which she was plunging, she gathered strength from her love to shake off the glacial chill of her presentiments.

"Corentin," she said, with an attempt at gayety of manner, "I trust that you will allow me to make my toilet."

"Marie," said he—"yes, allow me to call you by that name—you do not know me yet! Look you, a less keen-sighted man than I am would have discovered before now your love for the Marquis de Montauran. I have offered you several times both my heart and my hand. You have not deemed me worthy of you, and perhaps you are right; but if you think that you are of too high rank, too beautiful or too grand for me, I shall find a way to bring you down to my level. My ambition and my maxims have given you little esteem for me; and, frankly, you are wrong. Men are not worth what I value them at, and that is almost nothing. I shall certainly reach a high position, the honors attaching to which will flatter your vanity. Who will be better able to love you, who will leave you more

absolutely mistress of yourself than the man who has loved you for five years past ? Although I run the risk of causing you to form an unfavorable idea of me, for you cannot conceive that a man may renounce through excess of love the woman he idolizes, I propose to give you the measure of the unselfishness of my adoration of you. Don't shake your pretty head in that way. If the marquis loves you, marry him ; but, in the first place, be very sure of his sincerity. I should be in despair to know that you were deceived, for I prefer your happiness to my own. My resolution may surprise you, but you must attribute it to the prudence of a man who is not foolish enough to want to possess a woman in spite of her. And so I blame myself, not you, for the uselessness of my efforts. I have hoped to conquer you by my submissiveness and devotion, for I have been trying for a long time, as you know, to make you happy according to my lights ; but you have refused to reward me for anything I have done."

"I have endured you near me," she said haughtily.

"Say further that you repent it."

"After the infamous undertaking in which you have involved me, ought I still to thank you ?"

"When I suggested to you an enterprise that was not without drawbacks to timorous minds," he replied audaciously, "I had only your interests in view. For my own part, whether I succeed or fail, I shall be able now to make any result contribute to the success of my plans. If you were to marry

Montauran, I should be delighted to make myself of use to the cause of the Bourbons, in Paris, where I am a member of the Clichy Club. Now, any circumstance that should put me in correspondence with the princes would induce me to abandon the interests of a Republic which is marching fast to its ruin. General Bonaparte is too clever a man not to feel that it is impossible for him to be at one and the same time in Germany, in Italy, and here, where the Revolution is going to pieces. He brought about the 18th Brumaire, I have no doubt, in order to obtain better terms from the Bourbons when negotiating with them concerning France, for he is a very shrewd fellow and doesn't lack breadth of vision; but clever politicians ought to obtain the start of him in the road he has taken. To betray France is one of the scruples that we superior men leave to fools. I do not conceal from you that I have the necessary powers to enter into negotiations with the leaders of the Chouans as well as to put them to death; for Fouché, my principal, is a deep man, he has always played a double game; during the Terror, he was for both Robespierre and Danton—"

"Whom you abandoned like a coward!" she interposed.

"Nonsense," rejoined Corentin; "he is dead, forget him. Come, speak frankly to me, I set you the example. This demi-brigade commander is more cunning than he seems, and if you want to evade his watchfulness, I could be of some use to you. Remember that he has filled the valleys with con-

tre-Chouans and would very soon discover your meetings. If you remain here, under his eyes, you are at the mercy of his police. See how quickly he learned that that Chouan was at your house ! Must not his military sagacity suggest to him that your slightest movements will indicate those of the marquis, if he loves you ? ”

Mademoiselle de Verneuil had never heard a voice so soft and affectionate ; Corentin was all good faith, and seemed to trust her completely. The poor girl's heart was so ready to receive generous impressions, that she was on the point of disclosing her secret to the serpent that was enveloping her in its folds ; she reflected, however, that she had no proof of the sincerity of his artificial words, so she had no scruple about deceiving her spy.

“ Well,” she replied, “ you have guessed the truth, Corentin. Yes, I love the marquis ; but he does not love me ! at least, I fear so ; and so the appointment he has made with me seems to me to conceal some snare.”

“ But you told us yesterday,” rejoined Corentin, “ that he came with you as far as Fougères. If he had chosen to use force upon you, you would not be here.”

“ Your heart is withered, Corentin. You can devise shrewd combinations upon the incidents of human life, but not upon those of a passion. That perhaps is the explanation of the constant repugnance you inspire in me. As you are so clear-sighted, try to understand how a man from whom I tore myself

away on the day before yesterday will be waiting impatiently for me to-day, toward evening, in a house at Florigny on the Mayenne road."

At that avowal, which seemed to have escaped the outspoken, passionate creature in a natural outburst of feeling, Corentin blushed, for he was still young; but he cast upon her, by stealth, one of those piercing glances that seek to read the mind. Mademoiselle de Verneuil's naïveté was so well played that she deceived the spy, and he answered with assumed good humor :

"Would you like me to follow you at a distance? I should have some soldiers with me in disguise, and we would be ready to do your bidding."

"I agree," said she; "but promise me upon your honor—Oh! no, I don't trust that!—by your salvation, but you don't believe in God!—by your soul, but perhaps you haven't one! What assurance can you give me of your fidelity? And yet I trust myself to you, and I place in your hands more than my life—either my love or my revenge!"

The slight smile that played over Corentin's pale face afforded Mademoiselle de Verneuil a glimpse of the peril she had avoided. The spy, whose nostrils contracted instead of dilating, took his victim's hand, kissed it with marks of the most profound respect, and left her with a salute that was not devoid of grace.

Three hours after this scene, Mademoiselle de Verneuil, fearing that Corentin might return, left the town secretly by Porte Saint-Léonard, and found

her way to the narrow path leading from the Nid-aux-Crocs to the valley of the Nançon. She believed that she was safe, walking without witnesses through the labyrinth of paths that led to Galope-Chopine's hovel, whither she bent her steps joyously, guided by the hope of finding happiness at last and by the desire to save her lover from the fate by which he was threatened.

Meanwhile Corentin was in search of the commandant. He had some difficulty in recognizing Hulot when he found him on a small square where he was attending to some military preparations. In fact, the gallant veteran had made a sacrifice, the extent of which will hardly be appreciated. His cue and his moustaches were cut, and his hair, having been subjected to the ecclesiastical régime, had a touch of powder. With clumsy hob-nailed shoes on his feet, his old blue uniform and his sword exchanged for a suit of goatskin, armed with a heavy carbine and with pistols in his belt, he was reviewing two hundred natives of Fougères, whose costumes might have deceived the eye of the most experienced Chouan. The warlike spirit of the little town and the Breton character were alike displayed in this scene, which was not an unusual one. Here and there a mother or a sister brought her son or her brother a flask of eau-de-vie, or a pair of pistols he had forgotten. Several old men were investigating the number and quality of the cartridges of these National Guardsmen disguised as contre-Chouans, whose high spirits indicated that they were bound

for a hunting party rather than a perilous expedition. To their minds the engagements with the Chouans, in which the Bretons of the towns fought with the Bretons of the country, replaced the tournaments of the days of chivalry. It may be that their patriotic enthusiasm was based upon some investments in national property. Nevertheless the benefits of the Revolution, which were better appreciated in the towns, party spirit, a certain national fondness for war, were also the moving causes of this ardor in many instances.

Hulot, wondering greatly, passed through the ranks, asking information of Gudin, to whom he had transferred all the friendly feeling he had formerly bestowed upon Merle and Gérard. A large number of the inhabitants were watching the preparations for the expedition, comparing the set-up of their noisy compatriots to that of a company of Hulot's demi-brigade. Standing motionless and silent, in perfect order, the Blues, under the orders of their officers, awaited the commandant's word, while every soldier's eye followed him from group to group. As he approached the old officer, Corentin could not help smiling at the change in his face. He had the effect of a portrait that does not resemble its subject.

"What is there new?" Corentin asked.

"Come and take a shot with us and you'll find out," replied the commandant.

"Oh! I'm not a Fougères man," rejoined Corentin.

"That's easy to see, citizen," said Gudin.

Some mocking laughter arose from all the neighboring groups.

"Do you think," retorted Corentin, "that the only way to serve France is with bayonets?"

Then he turned his back on the scoffers and applied to a woman to ascertain the purpose and destination of the expedition.

"Alas! goodman, the Chouans are already at Florigny! They say there are more than three thousand of them and they're coming to take Fougères."

"Florigny!" exclaimed Corentin, turning pale.—  
"The appointment wasn't there! Do you mean Florigny on the Mayenne road?" he continued.

"There's only one Florigny," replied the woman, pointing to the road that ended on the summit of La Pèlerine.

"Are you after the Marquis de Montauran?"  
Corentin asked the commandant.

"Partly," replied Hulot roughly.

"He is not at Florigny," rejoined Corentin.  
"Direct your battalion and the National Guard upon that point; but keep some of your contre-Chouans with you and wait for me."

"He's too cunning to be a fool!" exclaimed the commandant, as he watched Corentin striding away.  
"He's the king of spies!"

The next moment he gave the order for his battalion to move. The Republican troops marched silently, without drums, through the narrow suburb leading to the Mayenne road, making a long red and



blue line among the trees and houses ; the disguised National Guardsmen followed them ; but Hulot remained on the little square with Gudin and a score of the most intelligent young men of the town, awaiting Corentin, whose mysterious manner had aroused his curiosity.

Francine herself informed the quick-witted spy of Mademoiselle de Verneuil's departure, whereupon, all his suspicions changed to certainty, and he set out at once to gather information concerning a flight which he looked upon, and with good reason, as highly suspicious. Being informed by the soldiers on guard at the Saint-Léonard post, of the fair stranger's leaving the town by way of the Nid-aux-Crocs, Corentin hurried to the Promenade, and arrived there unfortunately just in time to watch Marie's every movement. Although she had put on a green dress and capote in order to be seen less readily, her almost insane antics made it an easy matter to distinguish the point toward which her steps were bent, through the leafless hedges white with hoar-frost.

"Aha!" he cried, "you were to go to Florigny and you are going down into the Val de Gibarry! —I am a mere booby, she fooled me completely. But patience, I keep my lamp lighted by day as well as by night."

Thereupon, almost certain of the place at which the lovers were to meet, Corentin hurried back to the square just as Hulot was on the point of leaving it to overtake his troops.

“Halt, general!” he cried to the commandant, who at once turned.

In an instant Corentin informed Hulot of the events, whose woof, although hidden, allowed some of its threads to be seen; and Hulot, impressed by the diplomat’s sagacity, grasped his arm:

“A thousand devils! you are right, inquisitive citizen. The brigands are making a false attack over yonder! The two flying columns that I sent out to investigate the neighborhood, between the Antrain and Vitré roads haven’t yet returned; so we shall find reinforcements in the fields who will be useful to us, I doubt not, for the Gars isn’t fool enough to risk a fight unless he has his cursed screech-owls with him.—Gudin,” he said to the young Fougerais, “run and tell Captain Lebrun that he can do without me at Florigny to have a brush with the brigands there, and come back as fast as you can. You know the paths; I will wait for you before starting out to hunt the *ci-devant* and avenge the murders at La Vivetière.—*Tonnerre de Dieu!* how he runs!” he added, looking after Gudin, who disappeared as if by magic. “How Gérard would have liked that fellow!”

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On his return, Gudin found Hulot's little troop increased by some few men taken from the different posts in the town. The commandant bade the young Fougerais select a dozen of his fellows, those most expert in the difficult trade of contre-Chouan, and to leave the town by Porte Saint-Léonard, in order to skirt the rear slope of the mountains of Saint-Sulpice, which overlooks the main valley of Couësnon, and upon which Galope-Chopine's cabin was situated ; then he put himself at the head of the rest of his troop and marched out through Porte Saint-Sulpice, the most direct route to the summit of the mountains, where, according to his reckoning, he should find Beau-Pied's detachment, whom he proposed to employ to strengthen a cordon of sentinels so posted as to guard the cliffs from Faubourg Saint-Sulpice to the Nid-aux-Crocs.

Corentin, assured that he had committed the fate of the leader of the Chouans to the hands of his most implacable foes, speedily betook himself to the Promenade the better to grasp Hulot's military dispositions in their entirety. He soon descried Gudin's little squad debouching through the valley of the Nançon and following the cliffs in the direction of the broad valley of Couësnon, while Hulot, skirting

the château of Fougères, climbed the perilous path leading to the summit of the mountains of Saint-Sulpice. Thus the two detachments advanced on parallel lines. All the trees and shrubs, decorated by the hoar-frost with rich arabesques, cast a white reflection, which enabled one to see distinctly the two tiny army corps moving along like gray lines. When he reached the plateau, Hulot detached from his troop all the soldiers in uniform, and Corentin saw them, in obedience to the shrewd commandant, form a line of sentinels at convenient distances, the first of whom was within speaking distance of Gudin and the last, of Hulot, so that no bush could elude the bayonets of those three moving lines, which were about to follow the scent of the Gars across the mountains and fields.

“The old guard-house wolf is a crafty fellow!” cried Corentin, as he lost sight of the last musket barrels gleaming among the clumps of broom; “the Gars is done for. If Marie had betrayed the damned marquis, she and I would have been united by the strongest of bonds, an infamous action—But she shall be mine!”

The twelve young Fougerais, commanded by sub-lieutenant Gudin, soon reached the slope formed by the cliffs of Saint-Sulpice as they fall away in a succession of smaller hills to the Val de Gibarry. Gudin himself left the road and leaped lightly over the brushwood fence of the first field of broom he came to, followed by six of his compatriots; the other six, by his orders, took to the fields on the

right, so that the search might cover both sides of the road. Gudin darted toward an apple-tree that stood in the midst of the clumps of broom. At the noise made by the six contre-Chouans whom he was leading through the forest of broom, trying not to stir the silvery-white clumps, seven or eight men, headed by Beau-Pied, concealed themselves behind some chestnut-trees which grew on top of the hedge surrounding the field. Despite the white reflection that lighted up the ground and despite their trained eyesight, the Fougerais did not at first perceive the Blues, who had made a rampart of the trees.

“Hush! here they are,” said Beau-Pied, who was the first to raise his head. “The brigands have tired us out, but as we’ve got them at the muzzles of our guns, let’s not miss them, or, by heaven! we’re not fit to be the Pope’s soldiers!”

Meanwhile, Gudin’s keen eyes had at last discovered the muskets aimed at his little band. At that moment, as if in bitter mockery, eight loud voices shouted: *Qui vive?* and eight musket shots rang out. The bullets whistled about the contre-Chouans. One of them received one in the arm and another fell. The five Fougerais who were unhurt retorted with a volley as they answered: *Friends!* Then they rushed rapidly upon their supposed enemies, in order to fall upon them before they had reloaded their weapons.

“We didn’t know we were speaking the truth!” cried the young sub-lieutenant as he recognized the uniforms and the old hats of the demi-brigade. We

acted like true Bretons and fought before we knew what we were doing."

The eight soldiers were struck dumb when they recognized Gudin.

"Bless me, lieutenant, who the devil wouldn't take you for Chouans in your goatskins?" cried Beau-Pied in a grieved tone.

"It's a misfortune and we are all innocent of blame, as you were not notified that we contre-Chouans were to make a sortie. But what are you doing?" asked Gudin.

"We are looking for a dozen or more Chouans, lieutenant, who are amusing themselves by tiring us out. We have been running like poisoned rats; but, by dint of leaping fences and hedges, confound them, our joints were getting rusty, so we were resting. I think the brigands must now be in the neighborhood of that old barrack that you see the smoke coming from."

"Good!" cried Gudin. "You," he said to Beau-Pied and his eight men, "will fall back on the rocks of Saint-Sulpice, across the fields, and support the line of sentinels that the commandant has posted there. You must not stay with us, as you're in uniform. We mean to have it out with these dogs, deuce take me! for the Gars is with them! Your comrades will tell you more about it than I can. File right and don't fire at six of our goatskins whom you may meet. You will recognize our contre-Chouans by their cravats, which are twisted into a cord without a knot."

Gudin left his two wounded men under the apple-tree and marched toward Galope-Chopine's house, which Beau-Pied had just pointed out to him, the column of smoke serving as a compass. While the young officer was put upon the track of the Chouans as the result of a meeting far from uncommon in that war, and which might well have had a more disastrous termination, the little detachment commanded by Hulot had reached a point in its line of operations opposite to that reached by Gudin in his. The old soldier, at the head of his contre-Chouans, crept silently along the hedges with all the ardor of a young man, he leaped the gates with agility, casting his keen eyes upon all the elevated points and pricking up his ears, like a hunter, at the slightest noise. In the third field he entered, he spied a woman of some thirty years, busily engaged in hoeing, bent almost double and working vigorously, while a small boy of seven or eight, armed with a sickle, shook the frost from the broom plants that grew here and there, cut them and piled them. At the noise made by Hulot as he landed heavily on their side of the fence, the boy and his mother raised their heads. Hulot not unnaturally mistook the young woman for an old one. Her brow and the skin of her neck were furrowed by premature wrinkles; she was so grotesquely clad in a worn goatskin that, except for a dirty, yellow cotton skirt, the distinctive mark of her sex, Hulot would not have known to which sex she belonged, for her long hair was hidden under a red woollen cap. The

rags with which the little boy was hardly covered afforded frequent glimpses of his skin.

"Hey! old woman," said Hulot in a low tone as he approached her, "where's the Gars?"

At that moment the twenty contre-Chouans who followed Hulot, clambered over the hedge of the field.

"Ah! to find the Gars you must go back where you came from," replied the woman, with a suspicious glance at the detachment.

"Did I ask you the way from the Faubourg du Gars to Fougères, old carcass?" retorted Hulot roughly. "By Sainte Anne d'Auray! have you seen the Gars pass?"

"I don't know what you mean," the woman replied, bending over to resume her work.

"You damned shrew, do you want us to be swallowed by the Blues who are on our track?" cried Hulot.

At that the woman raised her head and glanced again distrustfully at the contre-Chouans as she answered:

"How can the Blues be on your tracks? I just saw seven or eight going back to Fougères by the road over yonder."

"Wouldn't one think she was going to bite us with her nose?" rejoined Hulot. "Here, look, old nanny-goat!"

And the commandant pointed to three or four of his sentries some fifty yards behind, whose hats and uniforms and guns were easily recognized.



“Do you mean to let them shoot down the men Marche-à-Terre sends to the assistance of the Gars, whom the Fougerais are trying to capture?” he continued angrily.

“Oh! forgive me,” replied the woman; “but it’s so easy to be deceived! What parish are you from?” she asked.

“From Saint-Georges,” cried two or three of the Fougerais in Bas-Breton, “and we’re dying of hunger.”

“Well, look, do you see that smoke yonder?” said the woman; “that’s my house. If you follow the paths to the right, you’ll come on it from above. Perhaps you’ll meet my man on the way. Galope-Chopine should be on the watch to warn the Gars, as you know that he’s coming to our house to-day,” she added proudly.

“Thanks, my good woman,” replied Hulot.—“Forward, you fellows, *tonnerre de Dieu!*” he added to his men, “we have him!”

At the word, the detachment moved rapidly away on the heels of the commandant, who plunged into the path pointed out to him. Galope-Chopine’s wife turned pale when she heard the un-Catholic oath of the self-styled Chouan. She looked at the gaiters and goatskins worn by the young Fougerais, sat down on the ground, took her child in her arms and said:

“May the holy virgin of Auray and blessed Saint-Labre have pity on us! I don’t believe those are our people, their shoes have no nails. Run by the

lower road and warn your father, his head's in danger ! " she said to the boy, who disappeared like a deer among the furze bushes and broom.

Meanwhile, Mademoiselle de Verneuil had met neither Blues nor Chouans on her road ; they were hunting each other in the labyrinth of fields that lay around Galope-Chopine's hovel. As she spied a column of bluish smoke rising from the half-ruined chimney of that dreary abode, her heart beat so violently that the blood seemed to rush in waves to her neck with hurried, resonant throbs. She stopped, rested her hand on the branch of a tree and gazed at the smoke which would serve as a beacon to the friends and enemies alike of the young leader. She had never before felt such overpowering emotion.

" Ah ! I love him too dearly ! " she said to herself with a sort of despair ; " to-day I may not be mistress of myself."

Suddenly she traversed the space that separated her from the hovel and found herself in the yard, where the mud had been hardened by the frost. The great dog darted at her again, barking loudly ; but at a single word from Galope-Chopine, he wagged his tail and was silent. As she entered the cabin, Marie cast about her one of those glances which nothing escapes. The marquis was not there. She breathed more freely. She noticed with pleasure that the Chouan had exerted himself to produce something like neatness in the single filthy room of his kennel. Galope-Chopine seized

his fowling-piece, saluted his guest silently and went out with his dog ; she followed him as far as the door and saw him take the path that led away from his cabin to the right, the entrance to which was protected by a huge rotten tree-trunk, forming an almost ruined *échalier*. From where she stood, she could see a succession of fields, whose *échaliers* produced the impression of a long row of gates, for the nakedness of the trees and hedges made it possible to see clearly every detail of the landscape. When Galope-Chopine's broad-brimmed hat had altogether disappeared, Mademoiselle de Verneuil turned to the left to look for the church of Fougères ; but the shed entirely hid it from her. She turned her eyes on the valley of Couësnon, which looked like a vast sheet of muslin, whose whiteness lent added gloom to the gray, snow-laden sky. It was one of those days when nature seems dumb and when the noises are absorbed by the atmosphere. And so, although the Blues and their contre-Chouans were marching across the country in three lines, forming a triangle and closing in as they drew near the cabin, the silence was so profound that Mademoiselle de Verneuil was deeply moved by the circumstance, which added to her distress of mind a sort of physical distress. There was disaster in the air. At last, at the spot where a little fringe of forest broke the continuity of the row of barriers, she saw a young man leaping them like a squirrel and running with astonishing speed.

“ It is he ! ” she said to herself.

Dressed simply, in Chouan costume, the Gars carried his gun slung over his shoulder behind his goatskin, and, except for the grace of his movements, he would have been unrecognizable. Marie retired hastily into the cabin, obeying one of those instinctive impulses as difficult of explanation as fear; but soon the young nobleman was standing within two paces of her in front of the hearth on which a bright fire was crackling. They were both voiceless, afraid to look at each other or to move. The same hope united their thoughts, the same doubt kept them apart; it was agony, it was ecstasy.

"Monsieur," said Marie at last in a trembling voice, "solicitude for your safety alone has brought me here."

"My safety?" he demanded bitterly.

"Yes," she replied, "so long as I remain at Fougères, your life is in danger and I love you too well not to leave the place to-night; do not look for me there henceforth."

"Leave the place, dear angel!—I will go with you."

"Go with me! Can you dream of such a thing?—What of the Blues?"

"Ah! my dear Marie, what is there in common between the Blues and our love?"

"Why, it seems to me that it would be very difficult for you to remain in France with me and more difficult still for you to go away from France with me."

“Is anything impossible to him who loves well?”

“Ah! yes, I believe that anything is possible. Did I not have the courage to renounce you for your own sake?”

“What! you gave yourself to a frightful creature whom you did not love, and you will not consent to make a man happy who adores you, whose whole life you are and who swears that he will never belong to anybody but you?—Tell me, Marie, do you love me?”

“Yes,” she said.

“Then be mine.”

“Have you forgotten that I have resumed the infamous rôle of a courtesan, and that it is you who must be mine? If I seek to avoid you, it is in order that I may not let fall on your head the contempt I might incur; except for that dread, perhaps—”

“But suppose that I dread nothing?”

“Who will assure me of it? I am suspicious. In my position, who would not be?—If the love we inspire does not last, it should at least be complete and enable us to endure with joy the injustice of the world. What have you done for me? You desire me. Do you think that you have thereby raised yourself much above the level of those who have seen me hitherto? Have you, for an hour’s pleasure, risked the lives of your Chouans, without giving more thought to them than I gave to the Blues who were massacred when everything looked so black for me? And suppose I bade you renounce all your ideas, all your hopes, your king, who stands

in my light, and who, perhaps, will laugh at you when you have died for him, while I would die for you with respectful veneration? Or suppose I wished you to forward your submission to the First Consul, so that you could go with me to Paris?—Suppose I should demand that we go to America to live far from a world where all is vanity, in order to find out whether you really love me for myself, as I at this moment love you? To say it all in a word, suppose that I, instead of rising to your level, wished to pull you down to mine, what would you do?”

“Hush, Marie, do not slander yourself. Poor child, I have guessed your secret! As truly as my first desire became passion, my passion has become love. Dear heart of my heart, I know that you are as noble as your name, as great as you are beautiful; I am noble enough and feel that I am great enough to make society accept you. Is it because I foresee in you incredible, incessant joy? is it because I believe I have found in your heart those precious qualities which make us always love the same woman? I know not the cause, but my love is without bounds and it seems to me that I cannot live longer without you. Yes, my life would be distasteful if you were not always near me.”

“Near you?”

“O Marie, can you not read your Alphonse?”

“Ah! do you think that you flatter me greatly by offering me your name and your hand?” she said with apparent disdain, but gazing steadfastly at the marquis in order to detect his slightest thought.

“ And do you know whether you would love me six months hence, and if not, what would my future be ?—No, a mistress is the only woman who is sure of a man’s feeling for her ; for duty, the laws, society, the interests of children, are not its deplorable auxiliaries, and if her power is lasting, she finds flattery therein and a happiness that enable her to submit to the greatest imaginable mortifications. To be your wife and to run the risk of being a burden to you some day !—To that dread I prefer an ephemeral but genuine passion, even if misery and death are at the end of it. Yes, I could be a devoted wife, a virtuous mother, better than most women ; but to nourish such sentiments in a woman’s heart, a man must not marry her in a frenzy of passion. Furthermore, do I know myself that I shall care for you to-morrow ? No, I do not choose to bring disaster upon you, I am about to leave Bretagne,” she said, noticing some hesitation in his glance, “ and return to Paris, and you will not seek me there.”

“ Very good, on the day after to-morrow, if you see smoke on the rocks of Saint-Sulpice in the morning, I shall be with you in the evening, husband, lover, whatever you want me to be. I shall have defied everything ! ”

“ But, Alphonse, do you really love me,” she said wildly, “ to risk your life thus before giving it to me ? ”

He did not reply, but simply looked at her and she lowered her eyes ; but he read upon his mis-

treasure's glowing face an intensity of passion equal to his own, and he put out his arms. Impelled by a sort of frenzy, Marie fell softly on his breast, resolved to abandon herself to him in order to make of that sin the greatest of joys by risking therein all her prospects for the future which she would make more certain if she emerged victorious from this supreme test. But her head was hardly upon her lover's shoulder when there was a slight noise outside. She tore herself from his arms as if she had just awakened and darted out of the hovel. She succeeded in recovering her self-possession somewhat and was able to reflect upon her situation.

"Perhaps he would have taken me and then made sport of me," she said to herself. "Ah! if I could think that I would kill him.—Not yet, though," she added as she caught sight of Beau-Pied, to whom she made a sign which the soldier understood perfectly.

The poor fellow turned sharply on his heel, pretending that he had seen nothing. Mademoiselle de Verneuil returned abruptly to the room, motioning to the marquis to maintain absolute silence by pressing her right forefinger against her lips.

"They are there!" she exclaimed in dismay and in a low voice.

"Who?"

"The Blues."

"Ah! I shall not die without having—?"

"No, take—"

He seized her, cold and unresisting, and took from



her lips a kiss full of horror and of joy, for it might be the last as well as the first. Then they walked together to the door, putting their faces to it in such a way as to see everything without being seen. The marquis saw Gudin at the head of a dozen men who were holding the lower end of the valley of Couësnon. He turned in the direction of the row of gates—the great rotten tree trunk was guarded by seven soldiers. He mounted the cask of cider and broke through the shingled roof, intending to make his way to the cliff behind the house; but he hurriedly withdrew his head from the hole he had made: Hulot was in possession of the cliff and cut off his retreat to Fougères. At that moment he glanced at his mistress, who uttered a despairing exclamation: she heard the footsteps of the three detachments that had met at the house.

“Go out first,” said he, “you shall save me.”

At those words, which to her mind were sublime, she joyfully took her place in front of the door while the marquis was loading his blunderbuss. Having measured with his eye the space between the door and the tree trunk, the Gars rushed at the seven Blues, riddled them with his broadside and broke out a path through the midst of them. The three squads rushed together at the *échelier*, which the young man had leaped, and saw him running across the field with incredible swiftness.

“Fire, fire, ten thousand devils! You’re no Frenchmen! Fire, you hounds!” cried Hulot in a voice of thunder.

As he shouted these words from the top of the cliff, his men and Gudin's delivered a general discharge, which luckily was badly aimed. The marquis had already reached the *échelier* at the end of the first field; but just as he was leaping into the second, he was almost overtaken by Gudin, who had darted swiftly in pursuit. Hearing that redoubtable adversary only a few yards away, the Gars redoubled his speed. Nevertheless Gudin and the marquis arrived at the *échelier* at almost the same moment; but Montauran threw his blunderbuss at Gudin's head with such accurate aim that he struck him and checked his progress.

It is impossible to describe Marie's anxiety, and the interest manifested in the spectacle by Hulot and his command. Unconsciously they all repeated the gestures of the two runners without speaking. The Gars and Gudin were almost side by side when they reached the white curtain of hoar-frost formed by the little wood; but the lieutenant suddenly fell back and took shelter behind an apple tree. A score or more of Chouans, who had refrained from firing for fear of injuring their leader, now showed themselves and riddled the tree with bullets. The whole of Hulot's little band dashed forward to rescue Gudin, who, being unarmed, was dodging from apple tree to apple tree, seizing the moment when the King's Chasseurs were reloading, to run from one to another. His danger was of short duration. The contre-Chouans and Blues together, with Hulot at their head, met him at the spot where the

marquis had thrown his blunderbuss at him. Just then Gudin spied his adversary, thoroughly exhausted, sitting under one of the trees in the little thicket ; he left his comrades exchanging shots with the Chouans who were intrenched behind the side wall of the field, turned their position and darted toward the marquis with the speed of a deer. Observing that manœuvre, the King's Chasseurs shouted at the tops of their voices to warn their leader ; then, firing on the contre-Chouans with the accurate marksmanship of poachers, they tried to hold them in check ; but the Republicans courageously scaled the hedge that their enemies were using as a rampart and wreaked a bloody vengeance upon them. The Chouans thereupon retreated to the road that skirted the field in which this engagement had taken place, and took possession of the heights which Hulot had made the tactical mistake of abandoning. Before the Blues had had time to look about them, the Chouans had intrenched themselves in the hollows formed by the crests of the cliffs, under cover of which they could fire without risk upon Hulot's men if they should show signs of intending to give them battle.

While Hulot, accompanied by some few soldiers, was walking toward the little wood in search of Gudin, the Fougerais remained behind to despoil the dead Chouans and finish the wounded who were still alive. In that ghastly war neither party made any prisoners. The marquis having escaped, the Blues and the Chouans recognized the strength of

their respective positions and the uselessness of further fighting, so that both thought only of retiring.

"If I lose that young man," cried Hulot, gazing earnestly at the wood, "I will never make another friend!"

"Aha!" exclaimed one of the young Fougerais, who was busily engaged despoiling the dead, "here's a bird with yellow feathers."

And he showed his companions a purse full of gold pieces he had just found in the pocket of a stout man dressed in black.

"But what's he got there?" said another, producing a breviary from the dead man's coat. "It's consecrated bread, he's a priest!" he cried, throwing the breviary on the ground.

"The thief, he'll make us bankrupt!" said a third, finding only twelve francs in the pockets of the Chouan he was disrobing.

"Yes, but he has a fine pair of shoes," replied a soldier, who set about removing them.

"You shall have them if they fall to your lot," retorted one of the Fougerais, snatching them from the dead man's feet and tossing them on the pile of effects already collected.

A fourth contre-Chouan took charge of the money, in order to divide it when all those taking part in the expedition should have assembled. When Hulot returned with the young officer whose last attempt to overtake the Gars had proved to be as perilous as it was useless, he found about twenty of his troops

and thirty contre-Chouans surrounding eleven dead bodies which had been thrown into a trench dug at the foot of the wall.

"Soldiers," cried Hulot sternly, "I forbid you to share those rags. Fall in, and look sharp!"

"Commandant," said a soldier, pointing to his shoes from which his five toes protruded, "I don't care for the money; but those shoes," he added, pointing with the butt of his musket to the pair of hob-nailed shoes, "would fit me like a glove."

"You want English shoes on your feet!" retorted Hulot.

"But we have always divided the booty since the war began," said one of the Fougerais respectfully.

"I don't interfere with your following your usual customs," said Hulot roughly, interrupting him.

"See Gudin, there's a purse that contains a good lot of louis; you've done a good deal and your commandant won't object to your taking it," said one of his former comrades.

Hulot glanced askance at Gudin and saw that he turned pale.

"It's my uncle's purse!" he cried.

Exhausted as he was by his exertions, he took a few steps toward the heap of corpses, and the first body on which his eyes fell was his uncle's; but he no sooner saw the florid face marked with bluish bands, the stiffened arms and the wound made by the musket ball, than he uttered a stifled cry and exclaimed:

"Let us be off, commandant!"

The troop of Blues moved away, Hulot offering his arm to his young friend.

“*Tonnerre de Dieu!* that’s nothing,” said the old soldier.

“But he is dead!” replied Gudin, “dead! He was my only relation, and, although he cursed me, he loved me. If the king returned, and the whole province had wanted my head, he would have concealed me under his cassock.”

“What a fool he is!” said the National Guardsmen who remained behind to divide the spoils; “the goodman was rich and, going off like that, he didn’t have time to make a will and disinherit him.”

The division made, the contre-Chouans overtook the little battalion of Blues and followed it at a distance.

A horrible feeling of anxiety made its way, toward night, into Galope-Chopine’s hovel, where life hitherto had been so innocent and free from care. Barbette and her little boy, bearing upon their backs, the one her heavy load of furze, the other a supply of grass for the cattle, returned at the hour when the family usually took their evening meal. As they entered the house, the mother and the son looked in vain for Galope-Chopine; and never before had the wretched room seemed to them so large as in its present emptiness. The fireless hearth, the darkness, the silence, everything was ominous of disaster. When it was dark, Barbette made haste to light a bright fire and two *oribus*, the name given to

candles made of pitch, in the district included between the banks of the Armorique and the Loire, and still used in the country districts of Vendomois beyond Amboise. Barbette made these preparations with the moderation that characterizes our actions when we are under the influence of some profound emotion ; she listened to the slightest sound ; but, being frequently deceived by the whistling of the wind, she would go to the door of the wretched hovel and return more melancholy than ever. She cleaned two jugs, filled them with cider and placed them on the long walnut table. Again and again she glanced at her boy, who was watching the buck-wheat cakes, but was unable to speak to him. At one time the little fellow's eyes rested on the two nails upon which his father's fowling-piece usually hung, and Barbette shuddered when she noticed, as he had done, that the space was bare. The silence was interrupted only by the lowing of the cows or by the regular dripping of the cider from the bung-hole of the cask. The poor woman sighed heavily as she made ready a sort of soup made of milk, bread cut into small pieces and boiled chestnuts, with which she filled three brown earthenware bowls.

" They fought in the field that belongs to La Bé-raudière," said the boy.

" Go and see," the mother replied.

The boy ran out, saw the pile of bodies in the moonlight ; failed to find his father among them, and returned joyously to the house, whistling ; he

had picked up a number of hundred-sou pieces which had been trodden into the mud by the victors and overlooked by them. He found his mother sitting on a stool by the hearth, spinning hemp. He shook his head in answer to a questioning glance from Barbette, who dared not believe in any good fortune; then, as ten o'clock struck at Saint-Léonard's, the little fellow went to bed, after lisping a prayer to the blessed virgin of Auray. At day-break, Barbette, who had not slept, uttered a cry of joy as she heard in the distance the tramp of a pair of stout hob-nailed shoes, which she recognized, and Galope-Chopine soon showed his sullen countenance.

"Thanks to Saint-Labre, to whom I have promised a fine candle, the Gars is safe! Don't forget that we owe the saint three candles now."

Thereupon Galope-Chopine seized a jug and swallowed its contents at a draught, without taking breath. When his wife had poured out his soup and relieved him of his fowling-piece, and he was seated on the walnut bench, he said, as he drew near the fire:

"How did the Blues and contre-Chouans happen to come here? They were fighting at Florigny. What devil could have told them that the Gars was at our house? for he and his pretty *garce* and we two were the only ones that knew it."

The woman turned pale.

"The contre-Chouans made me believe they were gars from Saint-Georges," she replied, trem-



bling, "and I was the one who told them where the Gars was."

Galope-Chopine turned pale in his turn, and left his bowl on the edge of the table.

"I sent our boy to tell you," continued the terrified Barbette, "but he couldn't find you."

The Chouan rose and struck his wife so violently that she fell half dead on the bed.

"You cursed *garce*, you have done for me!" he said.

But, in a moment, terror-stricken, he took his wife in his arms.

"Barbette!" he cried, "Barbette!—Holy Virgin! my hand was too heavy!"

"Do you think Marche-à-Terre knows it?" she said, opening her eyes.

"The Gars," the Chouan replied, "has given orders to find out the traitor."

"Did he tell Marche-à-Terre that?"

"Pille-Miche and Marche-à-Terre were at Florigny."

Barbette breathed more freely.

"If they touch a single hair of your head," cried she, "I'll rinse their glasses in vinegar."

"Ah! I'm not hungry any longer!" cried Galope-Chopine sadly.

His wife pushed another full jug in front of him but he paid no attention to it. Two great tears ploughed their way down Barbette's cheeks and moistened the wrinkles on her faded face.

"Listen, wife, to-morrow morning we must make

a pile of brushwood on the rocks of Saint-Sulpice to the right of Saint-Léonard, and set fire to it. It's the signal agreed upon between the Gars and the old priest at Saint-Georges, who is coming to say mass."

"Then he is going to Fougères?"

"Yes, to his lovely *garce*. I've got a deal of running to do on her account! I believe he's going to marry her and carry her off, for he told me to hire horses and take them out on the Saint-Malo road."

Thereupon Galope-Chopine, being tired out, went to bed for a few hours; then went out again about his duties. On the following morning he returned, having faithfully performed the commissions that the marquis had entrusted to him. When he learned that Pille-Miche and Marche-à-Terre had not made their appearance, he soothed his wife's fears, and she, almost reassured, started for the rocks of Saint-Sulpice, where she had prepared, the night before, on the shoulder facing Saint-Léonard, a heap of brushwood covered with rime. She led by the hand her little boy, who carried burning coals in a broken shoe. His wife and son had hardly disappeared behind the shed when Galope-Chopine heard two men leaping the last of the row of *écha-lers*, and two angular figures came slowly into view like indistinct shadows through the thick mist.

"It's Pille-Miche and Marche-à-Terre!" he said to himself.

And he shuddered. The two Chouans appeared

in the little yard, their lowering faces, beneath their shabby broad-brimmed hats, resembling the faces engravers introduce in their landscapes.

"Good-day, Galope-Chopine," said Marche-à-Terre gravely.

"Good-day, Monsieur Marche-à-Terre," replied Barbette's husband humbly. "Will you come in and empty a jug or two? I have some cold cakes and fresh butter."

"We can't refuse that, cousin," said Pille-Miche.

The two Chouans entered the cabin. There was nothing in this beginning to alarm Galope-Chopine, who went at once to his great cask and filled three jugs, while Marche-à-Terre and Pille-Miche, sitting one on each side of the long table on the polished benches, cut off pieces of cake and spread them with thick yellow butter which, under the pressure of the knife, exuded drops of milk. Galope-Chopine placed the jugs, filled with foaming cider, in front of his guests, and the three Chouans began to eat; but from time to time the master of the house cast a sidelong glance at Marche-à-Terre, while taking pains to satisfy his thirst.

"Give me your snuff-box," said Marche-à-Terre to Pille-Miche.

And after shaking several pinches into the hollow of his hand, the Breton inhaled the snuff like a man who is preparing for some serious proceeding.

"It's cold," said Pille-Miche, rising to close the upper part of the door.

The daylight, dimmed by the mist, now found its

way into the room only through the small window, and lighted but feebly the table and the two benches ; the fire, however, gave forth a reddish gleam. At that moment Galope-Chopine, having replenished his guests' jugs, replaced them in front of them ; but they refused to drink, removed their broad-brimmed hats and suddenly assumed a very solemn air. Their gestures and the glances with which they consulted each other made Galope-Chopine shudder, and he fancied he could see blood under the red woollen caps they wore."

"Bring us your axe," said Marche-à-Terre.

"Why, what are you going to do with it, Monsieur Marche-à-Terre ?"

"Go on, cousin, you know very well," said Pille-Miche, putting away his snuff-box, which Marche-à-Terre returned to him ; "you have been tried."

The two Chouans rose slowly and seized their guns.

"Monsieur Marche-à-Terre, I didn't say a word about the Gars—"

"I told you to go and get your axe," rejoined the Chouan.

The unfortunate Galope-Chopine stumbled against the rough wooden frame of his son's cot, and three hundred-sou pieces rolled on the floor : Pille-Miche picked them up.

"Oho ! the Blues gave you new pieces !" cried Marche-à-Terre.

"As true as that is Saint-Labre's image," replied Galope-Chopine, "I didn't say a word. Barbette

took the contre-Chouans for the gars from Saint-Georges, that's the whole of it."

"Why do you talk business with your wife?" retorted Marche-à-Terre brutally.

"Besides, cousin, we're not asking you for explanations, but for your axe. You have been tried."

At a sign from his companion, Pille-Miche assisted him to seize their victim. When he felt the hands of the two Chouans upon him, Galope-Chopine lost all his strength, fell on his knees, and raised his hands despairingly to his executioners:

"My good friends, my cousin, what do you think will become of my little boy?"

"I'll take care of him," said Marche-à-Terre.

"My dear comrades," continued Galope-Chopine, as pale as death, "I am in no condition to die. Will you let me go without confession? You have a right to take my life, but not to destroy my chances of eternal salvation."

"That's true," said Marche-à-Terre, glancing at Pille-Marche.

The two Chouans stood for a moment in the utmost embarrassment, unable to decide that question of conscience. Galope-Chopine listened intently to the slightest sound caused by the wind, as if he still retained some hope. The sound made by the drops of cider falling at regular intervals from the cask, caused him to glance mechanically at the huge vessel, and heave a deep sigh. Suddenly Pille-Miche seized the victim by the arm, led him into a corner and said:

“Confess all your sins to me and I’ll repeat them to a priest of the true Church ; he’ll give me absolution, and if there are any penances to be done, I’ll do them for you.”

Galope-Chopine obtained a short respite by his manner of detailing his sins ; but, despite their number and the minute details he gave, he reached the end of the list.

“Alas !” he said as he concluded, “after all, cousin, as I am talking to you as to a confessor, I assure you, by God’s holy name, that I have hardly anything to reproach myself with except having buttered my bread a little too thick now and then, and I call Saint-Labre over the fire-place there to witness that I didn’t say anything about the Gars. No, my good friends, I didn’t betray him.”

“That’s all right, cousin, get up ; you can settle all that with the good Lord at one time as well as another.”

“But let me just say good-bye to Bar—”

“Come, come,” interposed Marche-à-Terre, “if you don’t want people to think any worse of you than they must, act like a Breton, and die decently.”

Once more the two Chouans seized Galope-Chopine, laid him out on the bench, where he gave no other sign of resistance than the convulsive movements due to the animal instinct ; at the last he uttered one or two low groans which ceased as soon as the dull thud of the axe was heard. His head was severed at a single blow. Marche-à-Terre took

the head by a tuft of hair, left the hovel, sought and found a large nail in the rough door-frame, twisted the hair around it and left the bleeding head hanging there, not even closing the eyes. The two Chouans washed their hands, without haste, in a great bowl full of water, replaced their hats, took their guns and leaped the *échelier*, whistling the air of the ballad called *Le Capitaine*. At the end of the field Pille-Miche roared in a hoarse voice, stanzas taken at random from that artless ballad, the simple cadences being borne away by the wind :

The first town they gain,  
She's arrayed by her swain  
In gleaming satin white ;

The next town they gain,  
She's arrayed by her swain  
In gold and silver bright.

She was so passing fair,  
That veils were spread for her  
Throughout the regiment.

The notes insensibly blended together as the Chouans moved away ; but the silence was so profound that some strains reached the ears of Barbette, who was returning to her house, leading her little boy by the hand. A peasant woman never hears without emotion that song, so popular in the west of France ; and Barbette involuntarily began to sing the first stanzas :

Come, my love, let's go,  
Let us go to the war,  
Let us go, 'tis time.

O captain bold,  
Grieve not, it must be told,  
My child is not for thee.

Not thine on land to be,  
Nor thine on rolling sea,  
Unless by treachery gained.

The father grasps his child,  
And in a frenzy wild,  
Strips and casts her to the deep.

The captain wiser, brave,  
Swift cleaves the yielding wave  
And swims with her to shore.

Come, my love, let's go,  
Let us go to the war,  
Let us go, 'tis time.

The first town they gain, etc.

Just as Barbette reached that point in the ballad at which Pille-Miche had begun, she stepped into her yard: her tongue froze, she stopped short, and a terrible cry, suddenly checked, burst from her gaping mouth.

"What's the matter, dear mamma?" asked the child.

"Go on alone," cried Barbette hoarsely, with-



drawing her hand from his and pushing him forward with incredible violence ; “ you have neither father nor mother.”

The child, who was rubbing his shoulder and crying, saw the head fastened to the nail ; his fresh young face retained the nervous convulsion caused by weeping, but he wept no more. He opened his eyes to their widest extent and gazed long at his father’s head with a stupid expression that betrayed no emotion ; then his face, rendered brutish by ignorance, began to express a savage curiosity. Suddenly Barbette seized the child’s hand again, squeezed it fiercely, and led him rapidly into the house. While Pille-Miche and March-à-Terre were laying Galope-Chopine on the bench, one of his shoes had fallen under his neck in such a position that it was filled with blood, and it was the first object his widow saw.

“ Take off your shoe,” she said to her son. “ Now put your foot in this one. Good. Always remember your father’s shoe,” she cried in a lugubrious tone, “ and never put one of them on your foot without remembering the one that was full of blood shed by the *Chuins*, and kill the *Chuins* ! ”

As she spoke, she shook her head convulsively and the locks of black hair fell down over her neck, giving a sinister expression to her face.

“ I call Saint Labre to witness,” she continued, “ that I devote you to the service of the Blues. You shall be a soldier to avenge your father. Kill the *Chuins*, kill them, and do as I do. Ah ! they

took my man's head, and I'll give the Gars's head to the Blues."

She leaped upon the bed, took a little bag of money from a hiding-place, seized her wondering child by the hand once more, dragged him away without giving him time to put on his shoe, and they hurried away toward Fougères, neither of them once turning back to look at the hovel they abandoned. When they reached the summit of the rocks of Saint-Sulpice, Barbette stirred up the fire and her son helped her to cover it with thorn-broom loaded with hoar-frost, to make the smoke more dense.

"That will last longer than your father, longer than me, longer than the Gars!" said Barbette fiercely, pointing to the fire.

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While, with a gloomy expression that bespoke revenge and curiosity, Galope-Chopine's widow and her son with the blood-stained foot were watching the smoke roll upward, Mademoiselle de Verneuil's eyes were fixed upon that rock, and she was trying, but in vain, to discover the signal described by the marquis. The mist, which had gradually grown more dense, buried the whole country beneath a veil, whose gray tints concealed the details of the landscape nearest the town. She looked anxiously, one after another, at the cliffs, the château, and the buildings, which resembled streaks of blacker mist. A few trees near her window stood out against the bluish background like the coral reefs of which the sea affords glimpses when it is calm. The sun gave to the sky the pallid hue of tarnished silver, its beams tinged with a doubtful flush the bare branches of the trees on which a few last leaves still fluttered in the breeze. But Marie's heart was filled with sensations too blissful for her to see aught of evil augury in the spectacle, or aught out of harmony with the happiness upon which her heart was feeding in anticipation. Within the last two days, her ideas had undergone a strange modification. The

bitter, unruly outbursts of her passions had slowly yielded to the influence of the even temperature that true love gives to life. The certainty of being loved, which she had gone in search of through so many dangers, had given birth within her to a desire to return to the social conditions which give sanction to bliss, and which she had turned her back upon only through despair. To love but for a single moment seemed to her like impotence. She imagined herself suddenly transported from the social depths to which her misfortunes had consigned her, to the lofty position in which her father had for a moment placed her. Her vanity, held in check by the cruel vicissitudes of a passion that alternated between hope and despair, awoke and showed her all the advantages of exalted rank. As she was, in a certain sense, born a marchioness, to marry Montauran, was it not to live and act in the sphere to which she belonged? After experiencing all the hazards of an adventurous life, she could appreciate better than any other woman the grandeur of the sentiments that make the family. Moreover marriage, maternity and its cares were to her not so much a task as repose. She loved the calm and virtuous life of which she had caught a glimpse in this last storm, as a woman, weary of virtue, might cast a covetous glance upon an illicit passion. Virtue was to her a new form of seduction.

"Perhaps," she said, turning away from the window without having seen any signs of fire on the rocks of Saint-Sulpice, "I have played the flirt

too much with him. But I did not know how dearly he loved me!—Francine, it is no longer a dream, to-night I shall be Marquise de Montauran! What have I done to deserve such perfect happiness? Oh! I love him, and love alone can reward love. Nevertheless God intends, I doubt not, to reward me for having preserved so much heart despite so much wretchedness, and to make me forget my suffering; for, as you know, my child, I have suffered horribly!”

“Marquise de Montauran to-night, you, Marie? Oh! until it’s an accomplished fact, I shall think I am dreaming. Who, pray, has told him all your noble qualities?”

“Why, my dear child, he hasn’t fine eyes simply, he has a heart. If you had seen him, as I did, in danger! Oh! he must know how to love, he is so brave!”

“If you love him so much, why do you allow him to come to Fougères?”

“Had we time to say more than a word to each other when we were surprised? Besides, isn’t it a proof of love, and can one ever have enough of them?—Meanwhile, dress my hair.”

But she threw into confusion a hundred times, as if she were strung on electric wires, the charming arrangement of her hair, mingling thoughts that were not as yet thoroughly calm with all the wiles of coquetry. As she twisted a curl or smoothed her glossy tresses, she asked herself, with a last remnant of suspicion, if the marquis were not deceiving

her, but the next moment she thought that such villainy would be inexplicable as he would expose himself most audaciously to immediate vengeance by coming to her at Fougères. As she studied mischievously, in her mirror, the effect of a sidelong glance, of a smile, of a slight wrinkle on the forehead, of an expression of anger, of love or of disdain, she tried to invent some woman's stratagem to enable her to probe the young Royalist's heart up to the very last.

"You are right, Francine," she said; "I wish, as you do, that the marriage were a fact. This day is the last of my nebulous days, it is big with my death or with our happiness. This mist is hateful," she added, looking out again toward the summit of Saint-Sulpice, which was still hidden.

She set about arranging the silk and muslin curtains that hung at the window, amusing herself by shutting out the light in such a way as to produce a voluptuous *chiaroscuro* in the room.

"Francine," said she, "take away those gewgaws with which the mantel-shelf is crowded, and leave only the clock and the two Saxony vases, in which I will myself arrange the winter flowers Corentin found for me.—Take away all the chairs, I want only a couch and an armchair. When you have done that, my child, brush the carpet so as to brighten up the colors; then put candles in the chimney sconces and in the candlesticks."

Marie gazed long and earnestly at the old tapestry with which the walls of the room were hung.

Guided by inborn good taste, she was able to find among the brilliant shades in the high warp, the tints which would serve to connect that antique decoration with the furniture and accessories of the boudoir, either by harmony of coloring, or by the charm of contrast. The same idea guided her arrangement of the flowers in the twisted vases that decorated the room. The couch was placed near the fireplace. On each side of the bed, which stood against the wall opposite the fireplace, she placed, on two small gilded tables, large Saxony vases filled with flowers and foliage that exhaled the most delicate odors. She started more than once as she arranged the undulating folds of the green damask above the bed and noticed the graceful fall of the flowered drapery beneath which she concealed it.

Such preparations are always accompanied by an indefinable secret bliss, and cause such delectable emotion that a woman often forgets all her doubts in such pleasurable employment, as *Mademoiselle de Verneuil* forgot hers. Is there not a touch of religious feeling in this infinitude of pains taken for the pleasure of a loved one who is not present to see and to reward them, but who will pay for them later with the approving smile that these flattering preparations, always so well understood, call forth? Women at such times abandon themselves in anticipation, so to speak, to their love, and there is not one who does not say to herself, as *Mademoiselle de Verneuil* thought: "To-night, I shall be very happy!" The most innocent of them inscribes

that grateful hope on the least prominent folds of the silk or muslin ; then, insensibly, the harmony she establishes about her imparts to everything a countenance on which love glows. In the centre of that sphere, so full of voluptuous meaning to her, things become beings, witnesses ; and she at once makes them accessories to all her future joys. With every movement, with every thought, she gathers courage to rob the future. Soon she ceases to expect, she ceases to hope, she upbraids the silence and the slightest sound seems ominous to her ; at last, doubt places its hooked fingers on her heart, she burns, she trembles, she writhes in the grasp of a thought that takes the form of a purely physical force ; it is alternately a triumph and a torture, which, except for the hope of pleasure to come, she could not endure.

Twenty times Mademoiselle de Verneuil had drawn aside the curtains, in the hope of seeing a column of smoke rising above the cliffs ; but the fog seemed from moment to moment to take on a darker tinge of gray, and her imagination finally discovered presages of evil therein. At last, in a burst of impatience she dropped the curtain, vowing that she would not raise it again. She looked discontentedly about the room to which she had given a soul and a voice, asking herself if it was to be all in vain, and that thought reminded her of what was still to be done.

“ Here, little one,” she said to Francine, beckoning her into a dressing-room which adjoined her



bedroom and was lighted by a bull's-eye looking out upon the dark corner where the fortifications of the town joined the steep cliffs of the Promenade, "put things to rights here, so that it will look as nice as possible. As for the salon you may leave that in disorder, if you choose," she added, accompanying the words with one of those smiles that women reserve for their private circle, and whose piquant delicacy men can never understand.

"Oh! how pretty you are!" cried the little Breton.

"Ah! mad as we all are, will not our lover always be our most beautiful ornament?"

Francine left her lying languidly on the ottoman, and withdrew step by step, divining that, whether he loved her or not, her mistress would never betray Montauran.

"Are you sure of this that you tell me, old woman?" said Hulot to Barbette, whom he recognized when she entered Fougères.

"Have you a pair of eyes? Just look at the rocks of Saint-Sulpice, good man, to the right of Saint-Léonard."

Corentin turned his eyes toward the summit in the direction indicated by Barbette's finger; and as the mist was beginning to fade away, he could see distinctly the column of whitish smoke mentioned by Galope-Chopine's widow.

"But when will he come, eh, old woman? This evening or to-night?"

"I don't know anything about that, goodman," was Barbette's reply.

"Why do you betray your party?" said Hulot hastily, leading the peasant a few steps away from Corentin.

"Ah! Monseigneur le général, look at my boy's foot! It is soaked in the blood of my man who was killed by the *chouins*, saving your presence, like a calf, to punish him for the three words you got out of me, day before yesterday, when I was working in the field. Take my boy, as long as you've taken his father and mother from him, but make a true Blue of him, goodman, and let him kill lots of *chouins*! See, here's two hundred crowns, keep them for him; if they're used carefully, they'll carry him a long way, for his father was twelve years saving them."

Hulot gazed in amazement at the pale, wrinkled peasant, whose eyes were dry.

"But what's going to become of you, mother?" he said. "It's better for you to keep the money."

"Oh! as for me," she said, shaking her head sadly, "I don't need anything now! You might lock me up in the deepest part of the Tour de Mélusine"—and she pointed to one of the towers of the château—"the *chouins* would find a way to get in and kill me!"

She kissed her son with a sombre expression of grief, looked earnestly at him, shed a tear or two, looked at him again and disappeared.

"Commandant," said Corentin, "this is one of

those opportunities which, in order to be turned to the greatest advantage, demand two good heads rather than one. We know everything and we know nothing. To have Mademoiselle de Verneuil's house surrounded at once would be to turn her against us. You and I, your contre-Chouans and your two battalions aren't strong enough to contend with that girl if she takes it into her head to save her *ci-devant*. The fellow is a courtier and consequently cunning; he's a young man and a man of heart. We shall never be able to take him when he first comes to Fougères. Indeed, perhaps he's here already. Should we make domiciliary visits? An absurd idea! It does no good, it gives the alarm, and it angers the inhabitants."

"I am going," said Hulot testily, "to order the sentry at Saint-Léonard post to extend his beat three paces; that will bring him opposite Mademoiselle de Verneuil's house. I shall agree on a signal with every sentry, I shall remain at the guard-house, and when I am informed of the entrance of any young man whatsoever, I shall take a corporal and four men and—"

"And," exclaimed Corentin, interrupting the impetuous soldier, "if the young man isn't the marquis, if the marquis doesn't come in at the gate, if he's already at Mademoiselle de Verneuil's, if—if—?"

Thereupon he looked at the commandant with an air of superiority in which there was something so insulting that the old officer cried :

“Ten thousand thunders! go about your business, citizen of hell! Isn’t this my concern? If that cockchafer falls into one of my guard-houses, I must have him shot; if I learn that he’s in a house, I must have the house surrounded, catch him and shoot him! But deuce take me if I propose to cudgel my brains in order to throw mud on my uniform.”

“Commandant, the letter of the three ministers orders you to obey Mademoiselle de Verneuil.”

“Citizen, let her come herself, and I shall see what I have to do.”

“Very good, citizen,” rejoined Corentin haughtily, “she won’t be long. She will tell you herself the hour and the moment when the *ci-devant* will be in the town. Perhaps she won’t be easy until she has seen you posting sentinels and surrounding her house!”

“The devil has turned man!” said the old *chef de demi-brigade* to himself in a grieved tone, as he watched Corentin hurrying up the Queen’s Staircase, near which this scene had taken place, and thence to Porte Saint-Léonard.—“He will put Citizen Montauran in my hands, bound hand and foot,” continued Hulot, still speaking to himself, “and I shall find myself in a scrape with a court-martial to preside over.—After all,” he added, shrugging his shoulders, “the Gars is an enemy of the Republic, he killed my poor Gérard, and it will be one noble less. Deuce take them all!”

He turned quickly on his heel and made a tour of

inspection of all the posts in town, whistling *La Marseillaise*.

Mademoiselle de Verneuil was absorbed in one of those meditations whose mysteries remain buried in the depths of the mind, and whose innumerable contradictory sentiments have often proved to those who have fallen victims to them that one may live a tempestuous and passionate life within four walls, without even leaving the ottoman upon which one's existence wears itself away. As she approached the catastrophe of the drama she had come in search of, the girl passed in review one by one the scenes of love and wrath which had added such zest to her life during the ten days that had elapsed since her first meeting with the marquis. At that moment she heard a man's footsteps in the salon adjoining her bedroom; she started; the door opened, she turned her head hastily and saw Corentin.

"Little trickster!" said the superior agent of police, with a laugh, "so you are still possessed by the desire to deceive me, eh? Ah! Marie! Marie! you are playing a very dangerous game in not letting me into the secret, in deciding on your plays without consulting me. If the marquis has escaped his fate—"

"It hasn't been your fault, has it?" retorted Mademoiselle de Verneuil with profound irony. "Monsieur," she continued in a serious tone, "by what right do you intrude upon me again?"

"Intrude upon you?" he asked bitterly.

"You remind me," she replied with noble pride,

“that I am not in my own home. It may be that you selected this house designedly in order to commit your murders with greater security. I am going from here ; I would go and live in a desert to avoid seeing—”

“Spies, say the word !” interposed Corentin. “But this house is neither yours nor mine, it belongs to the government ; and, as for leaving it, you will do nothing of the sort,” he added, with a diabolical glance at her.

Mademoiselle de Verneuil rose indignantly and walked forward a few steps ; but she suddenly stopped as she saw Corentin raise the curtain and smile as he beckoned to her to come.

“Do you see that column of smoke ?” he said with the profoundly calm expression that he knew how to maintain upon his sallow face, however deep his emotions might be.

“What connection can there be between my going away and a lot of wretched weeds which some one has set on fire ?” she asked.

“Why is your voice so changed ?” retorted Corentin. “My poor little girl,” he added in an undertone, “I know all ! The marquis is coming to Fougères to-day, and it is not with the idea of betraying him to us that you have arranged your boudoir, these flowers and these candles so voluptuously.”

Mademoiselle de Verneuil turned pale when she read the marquis’s death written in the eyes of that tiger with human face, and she was conscious of a

love for her lover that approached delirium. Each hair on her head caused her such atrocious pain that she could not endure it, and she fell back on the couch. Corentin stood for a moment with his arms folded across his chest, half content to inflict torture which avenged all the sarcasms and disdain which that woman had heaped upon him, half grieved to see a creature suffer whose yoke was always pleasant to him, however heavy it might be.

“She loves him!” he said in a hollow voice.

“Love him!” she cried, “oh! what does that word mean?—Corentin, he is my life, my soul, my breath!”

She threw herself at the man’s feet, for his calmness terrified her.

“Soul of clay,” she said, “I would rather degrade myself to save his life, than degrade myself to take it from him! I will save him at the price of all my blood. Speak, what do you demand?”

Corentin started.

“I came to receive your orders, Marie,” he said in a gentle tone, raising her with graceful courtesy.

“Yes, Marie, your insults will not prevent my being entirely at your service, provided that you deceive me no more. You know, Marie, that no one ever makes a fool of me with impunity.”

“Ah! if you want me to love you, Corentin, help me to save him.”

“Very good, at what hour is the marquis coming?” he said, forcing himself to ask the question in a calm tone.

“ Alas ! I don’t know at all.”

They looked at each other in silence.

“ I am lost,” said Mademoiselle de Verneuil to herself.

“ She is deceiving me,” thought Corentin.—  
“ Marie,” he continued, “ I have two maxims ; one is never to believe a word of what women say, that is the way to avoid being their dupe ; the other is always to inquire if they haven’t some interest in doing the opposite of what they have said, and in reversing the actions of which they are good enough to entrust the secret to us. I think we understand each other now ? ”

“ Perfectly,” rejoined Mademoiselle de Verneuil.

“ You wish for proofs of my good faith, but I reserve them for the moment when you have given me proofs of yours.”

“ Adieu, mademoiselle,” said Corentin dryly.

“ Come, come,” said the young woman with a smile, “ sit down there and don’t sulk, or I shall find a way to save the marquis without your help. As for the three hundred thousand francs that you always see spread out before you, I can place them on yonder mantel for you, in gold, the instant that the marquis is in safety.”

Corentin rose, recoiled a few steps and gazed earnestly at Mademoiselle de Verneuil.

“ You have become rich in a very short time ! ” he said in a tone whose bitterness was but ill disguised.

“ Montauran,” said Marie, smiling compassion-



ately, "will himself offer you a much greater sum for his ransom. So prove to me that you have the means to protect him from all danger, and—"

"Can you not," cried Corentin suddenly, "assist him to escape at the very moment of his arrival, as Hulot does not know the hour, and—"

He checked himself as if apprehensive that he had said too much.

"Why, is it really you who ask me to resort to strategy?" he continued, smiling in the most natural way. "Look you, Marie, I am certain of your loyalty. Promise me to make up to me for all I lose in serving you, and I will put that blockhead of a commandant to sleep so thoroughly that the marquis will be as free at Fougères as at Saint-James."

"I promise," replied the girl solemnly.

"Not that way," said he. "Swear by your mother!"

Mademoiselle de Verneuil trembled; raising a shaking hand, she took the oath demanded by the spy, whose manner had suddenly undergone a change.

"I am at your service," said Corentin. "Do not deceive me and this evening you will bless me."

"I believe you, Corentin," cried Marie, deeply moved.

She moved her head slightly by way of farewell, and smiled upon him with mingled kindness and surprise when she saw the affectionate, melancholy expression upon his face.

"What a ravishing creature!" cried Corentin as

he left the house. "Shall I never possess her, to make of her at once the instrument of my fortune and the source of my pleasure?—Throw herself at my feet, she!—Ah! yes, the marquis must die. And if I can't obtain the woman except by plunging her into a mud hole, why, I'll do it.—However," he said to himself, as he reached the square, whither his steps were bent unconsciously, "it may be that she is not suspicious of me now. A hundred thousand crowns on the spot! She thinks I'm a miser. That was a trick, or else she has married him already."

Corentin, lost in thought, dared not decide upon any course. The mist, which the sun had scattered about midday, gradually settled down once more and became so dense, that he could no longer see the trees, except those near at hand.

"Here's a fresh misfortune," he said to himself, as he returned slowly to his apartments. "It is impossible to see six feet ahead. The weather protects our lovers. The idea of watching a house that is guarded by such a fog!—Who's that?" he cried, seizing the arm of a stranger who had apparently climbed up to the Promenade over the most dangerous rocks.

"It's me," was the artless reply in a childish voice.

"Ah! it's the little fellow with the red foot. Don't you want to revenge your father?" queried Corentin.

"Yes!" said the child.

“ Good. Do you know the Gars ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Better still. Well, don’t leave me ; be quick about whatever I tell you to do, and you shall finish your mother’s work and earn some big sous. Do you like big sous ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ You like big sous and you want to kill the Gars ; I will take care of you.—Well, Marie,” he mused, “ you shall surrender him to us yourself ! She is too hot-tempered to stop to reason about the blow I propose to deal her ; besides, passion never reflects. She doesn’t know the marquis’s writing ; this is the moment to lay the snare into which her disposition will cause her to fall headlong. But Hulot is a necessary factor in the success of my scheme and I must go at once to see him.”

At that moment, Mademoiselle de Verneuil and Francine were deliberating as to the means of rescuing the marquis from the suspicious generosity of Corentin and Hulot’s bayonets.

“ I will go and warn him,” cried the little Breton.

“ Fool, do you know where he is ? Even I, assisted by all the instincts of my heart, might seek him a long while without finding him.”

After considering a goodly number of such insane projects, so easy of execution in the chimney corner, Mademoiselle de Verneuil cried :

“ When I see him, his danger will inspire me ! ”

Thereupon she determined, like all ardent spirits, to postpone her decision until the last moment,

trusting to her star or to the instinctive adroitness that rarely abandons women. Never, perhaps, had her heart been so tortured. At times she sat as if stupefied, with staring eyes, and again, at the slightest noise, she shivered violently like a tree almost uprooted, which the woodcutter jerks with a rope to hasten its fall. Suddenly, a loud report, produced by the discharge of a dozen muskets, rang out in the distance. Mademoiselle de Verneuil turned pale, seized Francine's hand and exclaimed :

“ I shall die—they have killed him ! ”

The heavy footfall of a soldier was heard in the salon. The terrified Francine rose and ushered in a corporal. Having executed a military salute to Mademoiselle de Verneuil, the Republican handed her several letters, the paper being far from clean. Receiving no reply from the young woman, he said to her as he withdrew :

“ From the commandant, madame.”

Mademoiselle de Verneuil, oppressed by sinister forebodings, read the following letter, written apparently in haste by Hulot :

“ Mademoiselle, my contre-Chouans have seized one of the Gars's messengers, who has been shot. The letter which I transmit herewith, found among those intercepted, may be of some use to you ; etc.”

“ Thank Heaven, it wasn't he that they killed ! ” she cried, throwing the letter into the fire.

She breathed more freely and proceeded to read with avidity the note enclosed ; it was from the

marquis and seemed to be addressed to Madame du Gua :

“No, my angel, I shall not go to La Vivetière to-night. To-night you will lose your wager with the count, and I shall triumph over the Republic in the person of that seductive creature, who is certainly worth one night, you must agree. That will be the only real advantage I shall win in this campaign, for La Vendée is about to make submission. There is nothing more to be done in France, and we will go to England together of course. But business to-morrow !”

The note dropped from her hands, she closed her eyes, said not a word, but sat with her head thrown back against a cushion. After a long pause she looked up at the clock ; it was four o'clock.

“And monsieur keeps me waiting !” she said with cruel irony.

“Oh ! suppose he could not come !” cried Francine.

“If he should not come,” said Marie in a hollow voice, “I would go to meet him ! But no, he cannot be long now. Francine, am I very lovely ?”

“You are very pale !”

“Look about you !” continued Mademoiselle de Verneuil, “see this perfumed chamber, these flowers, these lights, this intoxicating vapor ; is it all adapted to convey the idea of a celestial life to the man whom I propose to plunge to-night into the delights of love ?”

“What is the matter, mademoiselle ?”

“I am betrayed, deceived, abused, fooled, gulled, lost, and I propose to kill him, to tear him to pieces !

—Yes, there was always in his manner a disdain that he concealed but poorly, and that I chose not to see ! Oh ! it will kill me !—Fool that I am ! ” she added, with a laugh ; “ he is coming, and I have the night before me to teach him that, married or not, a man who has once possessed me cannot give me up. I will apportion the vengeance to the insult, and he shall die in despair. I believed that he had some greatness of soul, but he is evidently the son of a lackey ! Certainly he has deceived me most adroitly, for it is hard to believe that a man capable of giving me over without pity to the tender mercies of Pille-Miche, can descend to trickery worthy of Scapin. It is so easy to make a fool of a woman who loves you, that it is the most dastardly cowardice. Let him kill me, well and good ; but to lie, he, whom I had imagined to be so great ! To the scaffold ! to the scaffold ! Ah ! I would like to see him guillotined. Am I really so cruel ? He will go to his death covered with kisses and caresses that will have been worth twenty years of life to him.”

“ Marie,” said Francine with angelic sweetness, “ be your lover’s victim, as so many women have been, but do not be either his mistress or his executioner. Keep his image in the depths of your heart, without doing anything to make it a cruel reminder to yourself. If there were no pleasure in a hopeless love, what would become of us, poor creatures that we are ? That God of whom you never think, Marie, will reward us for having followed our calling on earth : to love and to suffer ! ”

“Little dear,” replied Mademoiselle de Verneuil, patting Francine’s hand, “your voice is very sweet and very seductive! Reason has many attractions in your person! I would like to obey you—”

“You will forgive him, you won’t betray him?”

“Hush, don’t mention that man again. Compared with him, Corentin is a noble creature. Do you understand me?”

She rose, concealing beneath a face of ghastly calmness, the frenzy of her mind and an inextinguishable thirst for vengeance. Her slow and measured gait indicated that her resolution was irrevocable. Abandoned to her thoughts, devouring the outrage inflicted upon her and too proud to avow the most trivial of her torments, she went to the guard-house at Porte Saint-Léonard to ask where the commandant lived. She had no sooner left the house than Corentin entered.

“Oh! Monsieur Corentin,” cried Francine, “if you take any interest in that young man, save him! Mademoiselle means to betray him. This wretched paper destroyed everything.”

Corentin carelessly took the letter from her hand, asking:

“Where has she gone?”

“I don’t know.”

“I will go and save her from her own despair,” he said.

He disappeared, still holding the letter, hurried from the house, and said to the little gars, who was playing in front of the door:

“ Which way did the lady go who has just come out of the house ? ”

Galope-Chopine's son walked a few steps with Corentin and pointed to the sloping street that led to Porte Saint-Léonard.

“ She went that way,” he said without hesitation, obeying the idea of vengeance which his mother had breathed into his heart.

At that moment, four men in disguise entered Mademoiselle de Verneuil's house, unseen by the boy or by Corentin.

“ Return to your post,” said the spy. “ Pretend to amuse yourself playing with the latches of the blinds, but keep a good lookout everywhere, even on the roofs.”

Corentin darted swiftly away in the direction indicated by the little fellow, thought that he recognized Mademoiselle de Verneuil in the fog, and did in fact overtake her just as she reached the Saint-Léonard post.

“ Where are you going ? ” he said, offering her his arm. “ You are pale, what has happened ? Is it proper for you to go out thus all alone ? take my arm.”

“ Where is the commandant ? ” she asked.

The words were hardly out of her mouth when she heard the steps of a reconnoitring party outside the gate, and soon distinguished Hulot's loud voice amid the tumult :

“ *Tonnerre de Dieu !* ” he cried, “ I never knew it harder work to see to make the rounds than it is



just now. That *ci-devant* must have ordered the weather."

"What are you complaining about?" interposed Mademoiselle de Verneuil, grasping his arm, "this fog will conceal revenge as well as perfidy. Commandant," she added in a low tone, "you and I must take such measures that the Gars can't escape to-day."

"Is he at your house?" he asked in a voice whose evident emotion betrayed his surprise.

"No," she replied, "but you must give me a sure man and I will send him to warn you of the *marquis's* arrival."

"What are you going to do?" said Corentin earnestly to Marie; "a soldier in your house would frighten him off, but a child, and I can find one, will arouse no suspicion."

"Commandant," continued Mademoiselle de Verneuil, "under cover of this fog, which you curse so, you can surround my house at once. Station soldiers everywhere. Place a detachment in Saint-Léonard's church to make sure of the Esplanade, upon which the windows of my salon open. Post men on the Promenade; for, although the window of my bedroom is twenty feet from the ground, despair sometimes gives one courage to jump from a dangerous height. Listen! I shall probably send this gentleman out through the door; therefore put none but a very brave man on duty there; for," she said with a sigh, "no one can deny his gallantry, and he will defend himself!"

“Gudin!” shouted the commandant.

The young Fougerais darted forward from the troop that had returned with Hulot and had drawn up at some little distance.

“Hark ye, my boy,” said the old soldier in an undertone, “this deuce of a girl is going to put the Gars into our hands, I don’t know why, and it’s none of our business. You will take ten men with you and station yourselves so as to guard the *cul-de-sac* at the end of which her house stands; but arrange it so that neither you nor your men can be seen.”

“Yes, commandant, I know the place.”

“Well, my boy,” rejoined Hulot, “Beau-Pied will come from me to tell you when the time has come for you to play with the little fellow. Try to reach the marquis yourself, and if you can kill him, so that I won’t have to order him shot judicially, you shall be a lieutenant within a fortnight or my name is not Hulot.—Here, mademoiselle, is a veteran who won’t sulk,” he said to the young woman, pointing to Gudin. “He will keep close watch in front of your house, and if the *ci-devant* comes out or tries to go in, he won’t miss him.”

Gudin marched away with ten soldiers.

“Do you know what you are doing?” said Corentin under his breath to Mademoiselle de Verneuil.

She made no reply but seemed to watch with a sort of satisfaction the departure of the men, who went to take their stations on the Promenade under

the orders of the sub-lieutenant, and those who, following Hulot's instructions, stationed themselves along the dark sides of Saint-Léonard's church.

"There are some houses connected with mine," she said to the commandant, "surround them also. Let us not pave the way for repentance by neglecting a single precaution."

"She is mad," thought Hulot.

"Am I not a prophet?" whispered Corentin in his ear. "As for the child I propose to put in her house, it's the little fellow with the bloody foot; so—"

He did not finish. Mademoiselle de Verneuil had darted suddenly away in the direction of her house, whither he followed her, whistling like a happy man; when he overtook her, she was just at her threshold, where he again found Galope-Chopine's son.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "take this little fellow with you, you can have no more innocent or more active messenger than he." Addressing the boy, he added: "when you have seen the Gars come into the house, run away, whatever anyone may say to you, come to me at the guard-house and I will give you enough to keep you in cakes for the rest of your life."

Having, so to speak, breathed these words into the boy's ear, Corentin was conscious of a strong pressure of the hand from the young Breton, who followed Mademoiselle de Verneuil.

"Now, my good friends, have all the explanations you choose!" cried Corentin when the door closed.

“If you make love, my little marquis, it will be on your winding-sheet.”

But, unable to make up his mind to lose sight of the fatal house, he betook himself to the Promenade, where he found the commandant busily issuing orders. It soon grew dark. Two hours passed and the various sentinels, stationed at equal distances, had noticed nothing calculated to arouse a suspicion that the marquis had passed through the triple cordon of watchful men in hiding, who surrounded the three sides of the Tour du Papegaut on which it was accessible. Twenty times had Corentin gone from the Promenade to the guard-house, twenty times had his expectations been disappointed, and his youthful emissary had not yet come in search of him. Absorbed in thought, the spy walked slowly along the Promenade, a prey to the martyrdom caused by the clashing of three fierce passions: love, avarice, ambition. Eight o'clock struck on all the clocks. The moon rose late. Therefore the fog and the darkness enveloped in awesome obscurity the locality where the drama conceived by him was about to be brought to a close. The agent of police was able to impose silence on his passions, he folded his arms resolutely across his breast and did not remove his eyes from the window that shone like a luminous phantom above the tower. When his steps led him toward the valleys at the foot of the precipitous cliffs, he gazed mechanically at the fog streaked here and there by the pale gleams of the few lights that shone in the houses of the town or the suburbs, above and

below the ramparts. The profound silence that reigned was broken only by the murmur of the Nançon, by the lugubrious strokes of the clock at regular intervals, by the heavy tread of the sentinels, or by the clash of weapons when the guards were relieved from hour to hour. Everything had taken on an air of solemnity, man and nature.

"It's as dark as it is in a wolf's mouth," said Pille-Miche at that moment.

"Go ahead," replied Marche-à-Terre, "and keep as quiet as a dead dog."

"I hardly dare to breathe," said the Chouan.

"If the man that has just let a stone roll down wants his heart to be a sheath for my knife, he has only to do it again!" muttered Marche-à-Terre, in a voice so low that it was drowned by the shivering murmur of the waters of the Nançon.

"Why, I did it," said Pille-Miche.

"Very well, old bag of sous," retorted the leader, "crawl on your belly like an angle-worm, or we shall leave our carcasses here before our time."

"I say, Marche-à-Terre," continued the incorrigible Pille-Miche, using his hands to assist him in crawling up to his comrade, and speaking in his ear in so low a tone that the Chouans behind them could not hear a syllable: "I say, Marche-à-Terre, if we can believe our *grande garce*, there must be some rich plunder up yonder. Shall we two divide it?"

"Listen, Pille-Miche!" said Marche-à-Terre, stopping short, flat on his belly.

The whole party imitated his movement, the

Chouans were so overdone by the difficulties encountered in climbing the precipice.

"I know you," continued Marche-à-Terre, "for one of those honest John Grab-alls who like to give blows quite as well as take them, when that's the only choice. We haven't come here to put on dead men's shoes, we are devils against devils, and woe to those who have the shortest claws! The *grande garce* has sent us here to save the Gars. He's there, see, lift up your dog-nose and look at that window over the tower!"

At that moment the clocks struck midnight. The moon rose and gave to the fog the appearance of white smoke. Pille-Miche seized Marche-à-Terre's arm and pointed silently to the triangular blades of divers gleaming bayonets ten feet above them.

"The Blues are there already," said Pille-Miche; "we shan't be strong enough."

"Patience!" replied Marche-à-Terre; "if I didn't make any mistake when I looked about this morning, we ought to find, at the foot of the Tour du Papegaut, between the ramparts and the Promenade, a little space where they throw dung, and we can let ourselves drop on that as if it was a bed."

"If Saint Labre would change the blood that is going to flow, into good cider," said Pille-Miche, "the Fougerais would have a good stock to-morrow."

Marche-à-Terre covered his friend's mouth with his broad hand; then a whispered word from him ran from man to man till it reached the last Chouan hanging in the air over the heather that grew among

the slaty rocks. In truth, Corentin's ear was too quick not to have heard the rustling of the shrubs as the Chouans brushed against them, or the faint sound of stones falling to the foot of the precipice—and he was at the edge of the esplanade. Marche-à-Terre, who seemed to possess the gift of seeing in the darkness, or whose senses, being continually on the alert, had acquired the delicacy of those of savages, had caught a glimpse of Corentin; perhaps, like a well-trained dog, he had scented him. In vain did the police diplomatist listen in the silence and gaze at the natural wall formed by the schist, he could discover nothing. If the baffling whiteness of the fog enabled him to see a Chouan or two, he took them for fragments of rock, the human bodies so closely resembled lifeless nature.

The danger of the band was of short duration. Corentin's attention was attracted by a very distinct noise at the other end of the Promenade, at the point where the sustaining wall came to an end and the steep slope of the cliff began. A path cut along the edge of the schist and leading to the Queen's Staircase ended just at that point of intersection. Just as Corentin arrived there, he saw a figure rise before him as if by magic, and when he put out his hand to seize the creature, fantastic or real, whose intentions he could not believe to be good from his standpoint, he encountered the rounded, yielding figure of a woman.

“The devil take you, my dear!” he murmured.  
“If you hadn't fallen in with me, you might have

got a bullet through your head. But where are you coming from and where are you going to, at this time of night? Are you dumb?—Is it really a woman after all?” he said to himself.

As her silence was becoming suspicious, the unknown replied in a voice that indicated great alarm:

“Oh! good man, I’m just going home from a wake.”

“It’s the marquis’s pretended mother!” said Corentin to himself. “Let’s see what she’s going to do.—Well, go this way, old lady,” he continued, aloud, pretending not to recognize her. “To the left, if you don’t want to be shot!”

He stood still for a moment; but when he saw Madame du Gua going toward the Tour du Papegaut, he followed her at a distance with devilish adroitness. During that ill-fated meeting, the Chouans had skilfully landed on the dung-heap to which Marche-à-Terre had guided them.

“There’s the *grande garce*!” said Marche-à-Terre to himself, drawing himself up against the tower as a bear might have done.—“We are here,” he said to her.

“Good!” replied Madame du Gua. “If you can find a ladder in the house with the garden that comes to within six feet of this pile, the Gars will be saved. Do you see that bull’s-eye window up yonder? it’s in a dressing-room adjoining the bedroom, and we must get there. The side of the tower at the foot of which you are standing is the only one that isn’t surrounded. The horses are



ready, and, if you have kept the ford of the Nançon clear, we can take him out of danger in a quarter of an hour, mad as he is. But if that hussy tries to go with him, stab her ! ”

Corentin, when he saw, moving cautiously about in the shadow, some of the indistinct shapes he had taken at first for rocks, went at once to the post at Porte Saint-Léonard, where he found the commandant asleep, fully dressed, on the camp bed.

“ Let him alone ! ” said Beau-Pied roughly to Corentin, “ he’s only just lain down.”

“ The Chouans are here ! ” cried Corentin in Hulot’s ear.

“ Impossible, but so much the better ! ” said the commandant, half asleep as he was ; “ at least we shall have a fight ! ”

When Hulot reached the Promenade, Corentin pointed out to him the strange positions occupied by the Chouans in the shadow of the tower.

“ They must have fooled or strangled the sentinel I posted between the Queen’s Staircase and the château,” cried the commandant. “ Ah ! what an infernal fog ! But, patience ! I’ll send fifty men under a lieutenant, to the foot of the cliff. We mustn’t attack them there, for the brutes are so tough, that you could roll them down the precipice like stones, without breaking a bone.”

The cracked bell in the church tower struck two as the commandant returned to the Promenade, after taking the strictest military precautions, in order to make sure of the Chouans commanded by Marche-à-

Terre. At that moment, all the posts having been doubled, Mademoiselle de Verneuil's house had become the centre of a small army. The commandant found Corentin absorbed in the contemplation of the window that overlooked the Tour du Papegaut.

"Citizen," said Hulot, "I believe that the *ci-devant* is making fools of us, for nothing has stirred as yet."

"He is there!" cried Corentin, pointing to the window. "I saw a man's shadow on the curtains. —I don't understand what has become of my little gars: they must have killed him or bribed him. Look, commandant, do you see? there's a man! let us go!"

"I won't go and pull him out of bed, *tonnerre de Dieu!* If he went in, he will come out; Gudin won't miss him," replied Hulot, who had his reasons for waiting.

"Commandant, I order you in the name of the law to march upon that house at once."

"You're a pretty jackanapes to undertake to make me do anything!"

Unmoved by the commandant's wrath, Corentin said coldly:

"You will obey me! Here is an order in due form, signed by the Minister of War, which will compel you to do it," he added, producing a document from his pocket. "Do you suppose that we are such fools as to let that girl act as she chooses? We are putting down civil war, and the magnitude of the result justifies the paltriness of the means."

“I take the liberty, citizen, to tell you to go to—Do you understand me? Enough. Left foot first, and leave me in peace—off you go!”

“But read!” said Corentin.

“Don’t try to make a fool of me with your functions,” cried Hulot, indignant at receiving orders from a creature he considered so contemptible.

At that moment Galope-Chopine’s son appeared among them like a rat coming out of his hole.

“The Gars is on the way!” he cried.

“Which way?”

“By Rue Saint-Léonard.”

“Beau-Pied,” said Hulot, in the ear of the corporal who stood near by, “run and tell your lieutenant to close in on the house and deliver a brisk little fire, you understand!—File left, forward to the tower, you fellows!” cried the commandant.





To understand the final catastrophe clearly, it is necessary to return with Mademoiselle de Verneuil to her house.

When the passions reach a climax, they subject us to a form of intoxication much more powerful than the paltry excitement caused by wine or opium. The lucidity which then characterizes one's ideas, and the delicate sensitiveness of the too highly-strung senses, produce the strangest and most unexpected effects. Finding themselves under the tyranny of a single thought, some people perceive clearly the least perceptible objects, while the most palpable things are to them as if they did not exist. Mademoiselle de Verneuil was under the influence of this intoxication which makes of real life a life similar to that of the somnambulist, when, after reading the marquis's letter, she lost no time in so arranging everything that he could not escape her vengeance, as, but a short time before, she had prepared everything for the first holiday of her love. But when she saw that her house was carefully surrounded, at her command, by a triple row of bayonets, a sudden light flashed through her mind. She passed her own conduct in review and realized with a sort of horror that she

had committed a crime. In the first impulse of anxiety, she darted hastily toward her door and stood there a moment, motionless, trying hard to reflect, but unable to arrive at any conclusion. She was so utterly perplexed as to what she had been doing, that she wondered why she was standing in her vestibule, holding a strange child by the hand. Thousands of sparks were floating in the air before her like tongues of fire. She began to walk in order to shake off the horrible torpor that enveloped her ; but, like one who is sleeping, no object appeared to her in its true form or colors. She grasped the little fellow's hand with a force that was not usual with her, and dragged him along so fast that she seemed to possess the activity of a madman. She saw nothing at all in the salon as she passed through, and yet she was saluted by three men who stood aside to allow her to pass.

“ Here she comes ! ” said one of them.

“ She is very beautiful ! ” cried the priest.

“ Yes,” assented the first speaker ; “ but how pale and excited she is ! ”

“ And absent-minded ! ” added the third, “ she doesn't see us.”

At her bedroom, Marie perceived Francine's sweet face beaming with joy.

“ He is here, Marie,” she whispered.

Mademoiselle de Verneuil came to herself, recovered her power of reflection, looked at the child, whose hand she held, recognized him and said to Francine :

“Lock this boy up, and if you value my life, be sure to not let him escape.”

As she pronounced those words slowly, she had fixed her eyes upon the door of her bedroom, upon which they remained fastened with such ghastly immobility, that one would have said she could see her victim through the heavy panels. She softly opened the door and closed it without turning, for she saw the marquis standing before the hearth. The young nobleman's costume, without being too elegant, had a certain festal appearance that added to the beauty with which all women endow their lovers. At the sight, Mademoiselle de Verneuil recovered all her self-possession. Her lips, rigidly contracted, although half open, disclosed her white teeth and wore the semblance of a smile, far more terrible than voluptuous in expression. She walked slowly toward the young man, and, pointing to the clock, said with assumed gayety :

“A man worthy of being loved is surely worth the trouble of waiting for.”

But, overborne by the violence of her emotions, she fell upon the sofa that stood by the fireplace.

“My dear Marie, you are very fascinating when you are angry !” said the marquis, sitting down beside her, taking the hand which she abandoned to him and imploring a glance which she refused him. —“I trust,” he continued in a tender, caressing voice, “that Marie will be very sorry in a moment that she has hidden her face from her happy husband.”

At that she turned and looked him in the eye.

“What means that terrible look?” he laughed. “But your hand is burning hot!—My love, what is the matter?”

“My love!” she repeated in a low, trembling voice.

“Yes,” he said, kneeling in front of her and taking both her hands which he covered with kisses; “yes, my love, I am yours for life.”

She pushed him violently away and rose. Her features contracted, she laughed as madmen laugh, and exclaimed:

“You don’t believe a word of it, vile wretch, viler than the most infamous criminal!”

She pounced upon the dagger that lay beside a vase of flowers, and waved it within two inches of the astounded young man’s breast.

“Bah!” she said, throwing the weapon down again, “I don’t esteem you enough to kill you! Your blood is too vile to be shed by soldiers even, and I can think of nobody but the executioner—”

These last words she uttered with difficulty in a low voice, and stamped her foot like an impatient, spoiled child. The marquis approached her and tried to take hold of her.

“Don’t touch me!” she cried, recoiling from him in horror.

“She is mad!” said the marquis aloud, at his wits’ end.

“Yes, mad,” she repeated, “but not mad enough to be your plaything.—What could I not forgive to



passion ! but to seek to possess me without love, and to write to that—”

“ To whom have I written ? ” he asked with an amazement that certainly was not feigned.

“ To that chaste creature who wanted to kill me ! ”

At that the marquis turned pale, grasped the back of the armchair upon which his hand was resting, so fiercely that he almost crushed it, and cried :

“ If Madame du Gua has dared to resort to any infamous scheme—”

Mademoiselle de Verneuil looked for the letter, but could not find it ; she called Francine.

“ Where’s that letter ? ”

“ Monsieur Corentin took it.”

“ Corentin ! Ah ! I understand it all ; he wrote the letter and deceived me, as he only can deceive, with diabolical cunning.”

With a piercing shriek, she fell upon the sofa, and a flood of tears burst from her eyes. Suspicion, like certainty, was horrible. The marquis threw himself at his mistress’s feet and pressed her to his heart, saying ten times over the only words he could find to utter :

“ Why weep, my angel ? What harm has been done ? Your insults overflow with love. Do not weep, for I love you ! I love you still ! ”

Suddenly he felt her arms embracing him with supernatural strength, and she said amid her sobs :

“ Do you love me still ? ”

"You doubt it!" he replied in a tone that was almost melancholy.

She extricated herself abruptly from his arms and ran back two or three steps, as if alarmed or confused.

"Do I doubt it?—" she cried.

She saw upon the marquis's face a smile of such gentle irony that the words expired on her lips. She allowed him to take her by the hand and lead her to the door. At the farther end of the salon, Marie saw an altar that had been hastily erected during her absence. The priest was dressed in his sacerdotal robes. Two lighted tapers cast a light as soft as hope about the room. In the two men who had saluted her, she recognized the Comte de Bauvan and the Baron du Guénic, two witnesses selected by Montauran.

"Will you still refuse me?" the marquis asked in a low voice.

At the sight she stepped quickly back into her bedroom, fell upon her knees, raised her hands imploringly to the marquis and cried:

"Oh! pardon! pardon! pardon!"

Her voice died away, her head fell back, her eyes closed and she lay in the marquis's arms and Francine's as if she were dead. When she opened her eyes she met the young Royalist's gaze, a gaze overflowing with amorous kindliness.

"Patience, Marie, this storm is the last," he said.

"The last," she echoed.

Francine and the marquis gazed at each other in

amazement, but she imposed silence upon them with a gesture.

“Call the priest,” she said, “and leave me alone with him.”

They withdrew.

“Father,” said she to the priest, who appeared suddenly before her, “father, in my childhood, an old man with white hair like yours, used often to tell me that with profound faith one could obtain everything from God; is it true?”

“It is true,” the priest replied. “Everything is possible to Him who created everything.”

Mademoiselle de Verneuil threw herself on her knees with incredible enthusiasm.

“O my God,” she exclaimed in her ecstasy, “my faith in Thee is equal to my love for him! Inspire me! Perform a miracle, or take my life!”

“Your prayer will be granted,” said the priest.

A moment later she appeared before them all, leaning on the arm of the old white-haired priest. Her deep but secret emotion delivered her to the love of a lover, more brilliantly beautiful than ever before, for an expression of serenity such as painters seek to impart to martyrs made her face imposing. She gave her hand to the marquis and they walked together to the altar, where they knelt. This marriage, which was to be celebrated within a few steps of the nuptial couch, the altar, hastily erected, the cross, the vases, the chalice, brought thither secretly by a priest, the smoke of incense floating about the cornices which had never before

seen any smoke save that of banquets, the priest who wore only a stole over his cassock, the tapers in a salon—everything combined to form a strange and touching scene which will serve as a finishing touch to the picture of those times of sad memory, when civil discord had overturned the most sacred institutions. Religious ceremonies in those days had all the charm of mystery. Children were baptized in the rooms where their mothers lay groaning. As, in the old days, the Lord, humble and poor, went about consoling the dying. Young maids, too, received the consecrated bread for the first time on the same spot on which they had played the day before.

The union of the marquis and Mademoiselle de Verneuil was to be consecrated, as so many other unions were, by a ceremony forbidden by recent legislation ; but, at a later date, these marriages, most of which were solemnized at the foot of an oak tree, were all scrupulously sanctioned. The priest who thus maintained the ancient customs to the last moment was one of those men who are faithful to their principles when storms blow hardest. His voice, unsullied by the oath demanded by the Republic, uttered none but words of peace amid the tempest. He did not add fuel to the flame, as Abbé Gudin did ; but he had, with many others, devoted himself to the dangerous mission of performing priestly duties for those who had clung to the Catholic faith. In order to succeed in that perilous ministry, he resorted to all the pious artifices necessita-

ted by persecution, and the marquis was obliged to look for him in one of those excavations which, even in our day, bear the name of *the priest's hiding-place*. The sight of that pale, sickly face was so well calculated to inspire prayer and respect that it alone was enough to make of that worldly salon a sacred place. Everything was ready for the ceremony of disaster and joy. Before beginning the service, the priest, amid a deathly silence, asked the bride her name.

“Marie-Nathalie, daughter of Blanche de Casteran, who died Abbess of Notre-Dame de Séez, and of Victor-Amédée, Duc de Verneuil.”

“Born?”

“At La Chasterie, near Alençon.”

“I did not suppose that Montauran would be fool enough to marry her!” whispered the baron to the count.—“A duke's natural daughter, bah!”

“If it was a king's, it would be all right,” replied the Comte de Bauvan with a smile; “however, I shall not blame him. The other one suits me and I propose to make war on *Charette's Mare* from this time on. She doesn't want to bill and coo!”

The marquis's names had been inserted beforehand; the lovers signed, then the witnesses. The ceremony began. At that moment Marie, but no one else, heard the clashing of guns and the heavy, regular tread of soldiers relieving guard at the post she had ordered placed in the church. She shivered and raised her eyes to the cross over the altar.

"She looks just like a saint," murmured Francine.

"If some one would give me a saint of that kind, I would be deuced pious!" muttered the count.

When the priest asked Mademoiselle de Verneuil the customary questions, she answered *yes*, and sighed deeply. She put her lips to her husband's ear and said :

"In a little while you will know why I broke my oath never to marry you."

When, after the ceremony, the party had adjourned to another room where dinner was served, and just as they were taking their places at table, Jérémie entered the room, half dead with terror. The poor bride rose abruptly and ran to meet him, followed by Francine, and, resorting to one of those pretexts which women are so quick to find, she begged the marquis to do the honors of the banquet alone for a moment, and led the servant away before he had been guilty of an indiscretion that might have proved fatal.

"Ah! Francine, to feel one's self dying and not to be able to say : 'I am dying!'" cried Mademoiselle de Verneuil, who did not appear again.

Her absence might be accounted for by the ceremony that had just taken place. At the end of the dinner, when the marquis's anxiety was at its height, Marie returned in all the splendor of bridal garments. Her face was joyous and calm, while Francine, who accompanied her, had such profound terror imprinted upon every feature, that it seemed

to the guests as if they were looking at a curious picture in which Salvator Rosa's pencil had represented Life and Death hand in hand.

"Messieurs," she said to the priest, the baron and the count, "you will be my guests to-night; for it is too dangerous for you to leave Fougères. This good girl has my instructions and will show each of you to his room.—No rebellion," she said to the priest who was about to speak; "I trust you will not disobey a lady on her wedding day."

An hour later, she was alone with her lover in the luxurious chamber she had arranged so coquettishly. They finally reached that fatal bed where, as in a tomb, so many hopes are shattered, where the awakening to a life of happiness is so uncertain, where love is born and dies, according to the temper of the characters that are put to the test nowhere else. Marie looked at the clock and said to herself: "Six hours to live!"

"Can it be that I have slept?" she cried toward morning, waking suddenly with one of those starts that make us jump out of bed when we have made a compact with ourselves the night before to wake the next morning at a certain hour.—"Yes, I have slept," she repeated, seeing by the light of the candles that the clock would soon strike two.

She turned and looked at the marquis, sleeping with his head upon one hand like a child, and with the other hand clasping his wife's, half smiling, as if he had fallen asleep in the middle of a kiss.

"Ah!" she said to herself under her breath, "he

sleeps like a child ! But could he be suspicious of me, of me who owe to him a happiness without name ? ”

She shook him gently, he awoke and finished his smile. He kissed the hand he held, and gazed at the unhappy woman with such sparkling eyes, that, being unable to endure their amorous gleam, she slowly closed her great lids as if to shut out a perilous sight ; but by thus veiling the fire of her own glance, she so kindled his passion by seeming to repel it, that, had she not had profound terror to conceal, her husband might have accused her of too great coquetry. They raised their beautiful faces at the same moment, and exchanged a reciprocal smile of gratitude, instinct with the joys they had tasted ; but, after a swift glance at the fascinating picture his wife’s face presented, the marquis, attributing to some melancholy thought the clouds that passed across her brow, said to her softly :

“ Why this shadow of sadness, my love ? ”

“ Poor Alphonse, to what do you think that I have brought you ? ” she asked, trembling.

“ To happiness—”

“ To death ! ”

Shuddering with horror she leaped from the bed ; the astonished marquis followed her and she led him to the window. Checking a wild gesture that escaped her, Marie drew back the curtains and showed him a score of soldiers on the square. The moon, having scattered the fog, cast its white beams upon the uniforms, the muskets, the implacable



Corentin, who went and came like a jackal awaiting his prey, and the commandant standing motionless, with folded arms, nose in the air, with curling lips, alert and discontented.

“ Oh ! let us leave them, Marie, and return—”

“ Why do you laugh, Alphonse ? it was I who placed them there ! ”

“ You are dreaming ! ”

“ No.”

They gazed at each other a moment, the marquis divined everything, and said, pressing her to his heart :

“ Bah ! I love you still ! ”

“ Then all is not lost ! ” cried Marie.—“ Alphonse,” she said after a pause, “ there is some hope.”

At that moment they heard distinctly the cry of a screech-owl, and Francine burst out of the dressing-room.

“ Pierre is here ! ” she exclaimed with a joy bordering on delirium.

The marchioness and Francine dressed Montauran in the costume of a Chouan, with the astounding celerity of which only women are capable. When the marchioness saw that her husband was busily engaged loading the weapons Francine had brought, she quickly vanished, having exchanged a meaning glance with the faithful Breton. Francine thereupon led the marquis into the dressing-room that adjoined the bedroom. The young nobleman, seeing a great quantity of strips of cloth fastened securely

together, was enabled to realize the energetic solicitude with which the girl had labored to outwit the soldiers."

"I shall never be able to go through there," said the marquis, scrutinizing the narrow opening of the bull's eye.

At that moment a huge black figure entirely filled the aperture, and a hoarse voice, well known to Francine, cried softly :

"Make haste, general ! those toads of Blues are astir—"

"Oh ! one more kiss !" said a sweet, trembling voice.

The marquis, whose feet were already upon the liberating ladder, the upper part of his body being still inside the room, felt the pressure of a desperate embrace. He uttered a cry as he saw that his wife had put on his clothes, and tried to detain her, but she tore herself suddenly from his arms, and he was forced to descend. He kept a piece of cloth in his hand, and as the moonlight fell upon it, he recognized it as a piece of the waistcoat he had worn the night before.

"Halt ! Fire by platoons !"

These words, uttered by Hulot in the midst of a silence in which there was something horrible, broke the spell that seemed to rest upon men and things. A volley of bullets from the valley reached the foot of the tower, answering the fire of the Blues stationed on the Promenade. The fire of the Republicans was uninterrupted, it was continu-

## MONTAURAN TO HIS BROTHER

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*"Commandant," said the marquis, summoning all his strength, and still holding Marie's hand, "I rely upon your honor to inform my young brother, now in London, of my death. Write him that, if he has any respect for my last words, he will not bear arms against France, but will remain faithful to the king, none the less."*



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ous and pitiless. The victims did not utter a sound. The silence between the volleys was frightful.

But Corentin, who had heard a noise as if one of the aërial travellers he had pointed out to the commandant had fallen from the top of the ladder, suspected some snare.

“Not one of those beasts sings,” he said to Hulot; “our lovers are quite capable of fooling us with some stratagem here, while they are making their escape in some other direction.”

Impatient to solve the mystery, he sent Galope-Chopine’s son to fetch torches. His conjecture was so fully understood by Hulot that the old soldier, listening intently to the noise of a very serious engagement that was taking place before the Saint-Léonard post, cried :

“True, there can’t be two of them.”

And he darted toward the guard-house.

“We have filled his head with lead, commandant,” said Beau-Pied, coming out to meet Hulot; “but he killed Gudin and wounded two others. Ah! the madman! he fought his way through three lines of our comrades and would have found his way into the fields if it hadn’t been for the sentry at Porte Saint-Léonard, who spitted him with his bayonet.”

Thereupon the commandant rushed into the guard-house, and saw a bleeding body that had just been placed on the camp-bed; he drew near the supposed marquis, raised the hat that covered his face, and fell upon a chair.

"I suspected it," he cried, folding his arms violently ; "*sacré tonnerre !* she kept him too long."

The soldiers stood like statues. The commandant had shown the long black hair of a woman. Suddenly the silence was broken by the tramp of armed men. Corentin entered the guard-house preceded by four soldiers carrying Montauran on their muskets so placed as to form a litter ; his arms and legs were shattered by bullets. He was laid upon the camp-bed beside his wife ; he recognized her and grasped her hand convulsively. The dying woman turned her head with difficulty, saw her husband, shuddered in a way that was horrible to see, and murmured these words in an almost inaudible voice :

"A day without a morrow !—God granted my prayer too fully !"

"Commandant," said the marquis, summoning all his strength, and still holding Marie's hand, "I rely upon your honor to inform my young brother, now in London, of my death. Write him that, if he has any respect for my last words, he will not bear arms against France, but will remain faithful to the king, none the less."

"It shall be done," said Hulot, pressing the dying man's hand.

"Take them to the nearest hospital," cried Corentin.

Hulot grasped the spy by the arm so fiercely that he left the mark of his nails in the flesh.

"As your work is done here," he said, "clear



out of the camp ! and look well at the face of Commandant Hulot so that he may never find you in his path again, if you don't want him to sheathe his sword in your carcass."

The old fellow actually began to draw his sword.

"There's another of my honest men who will never make his fortune," said Corentin to himself when he was at a safe distance from the guard-house.

The marquis had sufficient strength left to thank his adversary with a motion of his head, attesting the esteem that soldiers feel for loyal enemies.

In 1827, an old man, accompanied by his wife, sold cattle in the market-place of Fougères, and no one said a word to him although he had killed more than a hundred people ; they did not even remind him of his former sobriquet of Marche-à-Terre. The person to whom we are indebted for valuable information concerning all the characters in this Scene, saw him leading a cow, with the simple, ingenuous air that leads people to say : "There's an honest, worthy man !"

As for Cibot, called Pille-Miche, we have already seen how he came to his end. It may be that Marche-à-Terre tried, but in vain, to rescue his companion from the scaffold, and was on the public square at Alençon at the time of the frightful tumult that was one of the incidents of the famous prosecution of Rifoël, Briond and La Chanterie.

Fougères, August, 1827.



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